

# Calcutta and Calcuttans

## From Dihi to Megalopolis

**ONEIL BISWAS** M.A., LL.M., PH.D.

Onauth Nauth Deb Gold Medalist,  
Anandaram Barooah Medalist and  
Griffith Memorial Prizeman.



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**CALCUTTA**      \* \* \*

## PREFACE

A large number of books on Calcutta have appeared recently. And an author who ventures to add to their number feels bound to offer some explanation. This book tries to fill in the gaps left by the current literature on the subject. *First*, it is well-documented throughout. This is an historical necessity to eliminate fictions from facts. *Second*, it has been made comprehensive so as to include various aspects of Calcutta and her people, the Calcuttans. *Third*, it traces the origin, growth and development of Calcutta and the Calcuttans in their socio-economic, political, cultural, and literary dimensions. *Fourth*, an attempt is made to keep to the ideal of history—writing as postulated by E. H. Carr in his book :<sup>1</sup> "Great history is written precisely when the historian's vision of the past is illuminated by insights into the problems of the present". In other words, the function of history is to promote a profounder understanding of both past and present through the interaction between them. *Finally*, a prognosis of Calcutta's future is attempted, since past and future are part of the same time-span. Interest in the past and that in the future are interconnected. It is a truism that records of the past are kept for the benefit of future generations. Here the historian not only asks the question 'why?' but also the question 'whither?'.

It was Herzen who said that Hegel (1770-1831) gave 'the algebra of revolution', while Marx (1818-83) wrote 'the arithmetic' into Hegel's algebraical equations. Similarly, it may be said that Voltaire (1694-1778) gave 'the algebra of action': "Your will is not free, but your actions are; you are free to act when you have the power to act".<sup>2</sup> It shows no more than that one can *do* as one pleases when one has the *power* to perform the *action* *willed*. And it was left for Robert Clive (1725-74) to put 'the arithmetic' into Voltaire's algebraic equations and thereby to demonstrate with the help of a handful of Englishmen that "a plan of political dominion even wider and foolhardy could in



effect be accomplished".<sup>3</sup> On December 30, 1758 Clive observed on the Indian situation thus : "The Moors (Mahomedans) as well as Gentoos (Hindus) are indolent, luxurious, ignorant and cowardly, beyond all conception. I am fully persuaded that after the battle of Placis (Plassey), I could have appropriated the whole country to the company and preserved it afterwords with case through the terror of the English Arms and their influence".<sup>4</sup> As observed by Montesquieu (1689-1755) : "An empire founded by war has to maintain itself by war". In this context, history becomes, in the words of Gibbon (1737-94) of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88), "little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind". Marx's famous thesis on Feuerbach was action-orientated and it ran thus : "Philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, but the point is to change it". Of the three terms—will, power and action (WPA)—the middle one is the most important. Marx himself did not make the Revolution, but Lenin (1870-1924), did it in Russia. To attain the goal he subverted Hegel, turned Marx upside down and added a new dimension to Clive's "terror" technique. One of Lenin's most familiar precepts was that a good communist must be ready to "resort to all kinds of tricks and ruses, to employ illegal measures, secretiveness and concealment of truth".<sup>5</sup> All these justify Gibbon's definition of history.

In this context one is apt to accept the definition given by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (C. 40-8 B.C.) in his *Arts Rhetorica* (11.2) : "History is philosophy drawn from examples". Calcutta's history (1690-1990) is thus drawn from the examples shown by the British during the period upto 1947 and that after August 15, 1947 shown by the Indians including Calcuttans. And this is narrated and depicted in twelve chapters of the book named, 'Calcutta and Calcuttans : From Dihi to Megalopolis'. The first chapter depicts Calcutta in prehistory and protohistory ; the second narrates the founding of Calcutta ; and the third shows how Calcutta grew to a capital city. Chapters IV, V and VI picture the English zamindar, the Collector of Calcutta

3. Fisher, H.A.L.—A history of Europe (1965), 852.

4. Thompson, E/Garratt, G.T.—Rise and fulfilment of British rule in India (Reprint, 1973), 65.

5. Lenin, V.I.—*Collected works* (1923), vol. XVII, 145.

and the chameleon collector. Next come chapters VII, VIII and IX with the police and civic arrangements, Calcutta's judiciary and the Imperial city in her majesty. And the last three chapters—X, XI and XII—deal respectively with the classes and the masses, Calcuttans' economic conditions and the evolution of the city from metropolis to megalopolis. The Epilogue dwells upon the 'possibility' of Calcutta turning a nekropolis. The present situation resembles that of the Roman Empire in its decline. According to Gibbon the latter was due to the triumph of barbarism and religion. Rome "fell before the Barbarian *from without* because of the decay through Christianity *within*". Voltaire considered Christianity as "l'infame". To say that Calcutta may go the way of Rome sounds a bit "deterministic" in the sense that "the data being what they are, whatever happens, happens definitely and could not be different. To hold that it *could*, means only that it *would* if the data were different".<sup>6</sup> It is a "prediction" based on the "initial conditions" being *similar* in both. But this is not an "unconditional prophecy of the future", because that would be what has been called 'historicism' by Popper.<sup>7</sup> This is a *conditional* prediction which is *dependent* on some initial conditions. However, the word 'contingent' means 'conditional', *i.e.*, dependent on some conditions.<sup>8</sup> In this context Fisher prescribes "only one safe rule for the historian : that he should recognise in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen".

Rome had to face the barbarians coming from *without*, while Calcutta is face to face with them arising from *within*. Clive Bell has characterised *civilisation* as consisting of primary and secondary qualities. The first is constituted of 'reasonableness' and a 'sense of values', while the second of "a taste for truth and beauty, tolerance, intellectual honesty, a sense of humour, good manners, dislike of vulgarity, brutality, freedom from superstition, a contempt for utilitarianism and philistinism—in two words, sweetness and light".<sup>10</sup> The barbarians are opposed to

6. Alexander, S.W.—Essays presented to Ernst Cassirer (1836), 18.

7. Popper, K.R.—The poverty of historicism (paper back edn. 1961).

8. Hamlyn's Encyclopedic World Dictionary, 360.

9. Fisher, H.A.L.—A history of Europe (1965) ; Preface, Jan. 1936.

10. Bell, C.—Civilisation (Penguin Reprint, 1974), 104.

the values of civilisation. They thrive under the protective umbrella of democracy. The reason is this. The Lincoln formula for democracy—"Government of the people by the people"—has been replaced by the formula ; 'Government of the people by an *elite* sprung from the people'.<sup>11</sup> The *elite* becomes quickly professionalised. And democracy assumes a new form. In the words of Schumpeter, "democracy is the rule of the politicians". According to him, it is a system "in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote".<sup>12</sup> It is a myth to say that the people constitute the sovereign power ; rather they constitute the area in which leaderships contend. The role of ordinary citizens is to provide others with power.<sup>13</sup> Thus is born barbarism, within the politicians, of excessive "lust and greed" for power of various forms. The abstract becomes concrete : Barbarism becomes the Barbarian. In no time the barbarians capture the politicians and recruit them to their horde. This convulses the whole system and reduces democracy to the rule by the barbarians, that is, the power-mongers and power-brokers engaged in loot and plunder in the name of *vox populi*. And Calcutta sounds a note of warning to the Calcuttans.

ONEIL BISWAS

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# Calcutta and Calcuttans



## CHAPTER I

# CALCUTTA IN PREHISTORY AND PROTOHISTORY

Written history contains a very patchy and incomplete record of what mankind has accomplished in parts of the world during the last five thousand years. Archaeology surveys a period a hundred times as long. In this enlarged field of study it does disclose general trends, cumulative changes in one main direction and towards recognisable results. Aided by archaeology, history with its prelude prehistory becomes a continuation of natural history.

— Gordon Childe: *What happened in history* (1942), 13

Calcutta is situated in latitude 22° 23' 47" N. and longitude 88° 23' 34" E., on the east bank of the Hooghly, exactly 86.2 miles (132.18 kilometres) from the sea, off the Saugor anchorage buoy upto Fort William. The maximum temperature during summer is 40.3 degree C. while the minimum is 10 degree C. The average rainfall is 1605 mm. To get at the result of the archaeological investigation of Calcutta, it is necessary to have an idea of the three terms used—Historic; Prehistoric; Proto-historic. The *Historic* period begins only when written documents or records of an historical character become available in any region. The cultures that precede the *Historic* period are called *Prehistoric*. This means that they demand our attention as archaeologists rather than as historians. When there is a growing certainty of the archaeological culture, the term *Proto-historic* becomes relevant. And this has been used in two senses : (i) to describe the civilisation for which written records are available, though not deciphered, or (ii) to describe mainly the cultures and periods about which certain inferences may be made on the basis of texts handed down orally or written at a later date.<sup>1</sup> However, H. D. Sankalia defines these terms in relation

1. Bridget/R. Allchin—*The birth of Indian Civilisation* (1968), 27.



to India and Pakistan in a modified way. According to him, archaeology primarily means study of antiquities. These may fall into historical archaeology when they belong to a historical period; others may belong to a period beyond the former. This earlier-than-history period is known as prehistory and illustrated by countries like Africa, Australia, even England, France and Germany, where there is no systematic study of oral tradition or literature. India is an exception to this. Here no written regular accounts are available till the 3rd century B.C., still it has a well-developed literature, namely, the Vedic and Sutra going back to C. 1500 B.C. Since it was not written, it is called Protohistory. On the other hand, prehistory means the history of a region, a country, or a nation, people or race, before it took to writing. This is unlike ordinary history, since it is not based on accounts of contemporary or later writers. Hence, prehistory is also defined as an account of illiterate or preliterate people. And the question is: How is the history of such a people or country known? The answer is: language, place—names and study of the people's physical features, manners and customs, legends and traditions, their monuments. Even a study of land-forms, soil and vegetation and animals may help illustrate this story. Prehistoric archaeology thus deals with that period of time of which we have no legend, no tradition and no object, except stone and bone, implements and remains of animals. It comprises the various Stone Ages. Likewise, the Indus Valley or Harappa Civilisation is included under Protohistory. *First*, their authors were not illiterate as is evident from their seals. *Second*, this civilisation is one of the sources of the later-day Brahmanism and Hinduism. Protohistory would thus cover various chalcolithic cultures, contemporaries and successors of the Indus Civilisation.<sup>2</sup>

### **I. The geological basis.**

The crust of the earth may be divided into a number of plates according to the theory of plate tectonics. These plates are

rigid and shift owing to sea-floor spreading and subduction. It seems that the continental masses collected together, broke up and reformed several times during  $4\frac{1}{2}$  billion years of the earth's history. In the early Triassic Period (225 to 190 million years ago) most of the earth's land formed a single continental mass, called Pangaea and was surrounded by one ocean named Panthalasse.<sup>3</sup> The latest break-up occurred about 200 million years ago and the plates began to move in different directions. Pangaea split into two masses, known as Laurasia and Gondwana. The former broke into three—the western-most formed North America while the eastern-most two of the Asian-European Landmass. And most of the Asian mass is carried on two plates—the Eurasian and the East Asian. In the Jurassic Period (190 to 136 million years ago) the Indian portion of the Gondwana mass split off and began to move in the northern direction towards Asia. The Indian Gondwana is on the same plate with Australia. However, the Indian portion swung north faster and collided with the East Asian and Eurasian plates in the Eocene period (54 to 38 million years ago). As a result the Himalayas and the Arakan Yomas were raised. The Indo-Australian plate is subducted under the East Asian plate along the Himalayan line, but under the Arakan Yoma the two plates only rub against each other along a transform fault.<sup>4</sup>

In the Oligocene period (38 to 26 million years ago), a portion of the north-eastern part of India fractured and sank below sea-level, some time after the plate-collision. This was filled up over the next 37 million years to form what is called the Bengal Basin. Bengal—Bangladesh and West Bengal—is formed on a mass of sediments underlain by the old rocks of the Gondwana Continent. And the old rocks crop up on the two sides of the Bengal Basin—the Meghalaya plateau in the east and the Chhota Nagpur plateau. In between the two plateaux lies the narrow part of the Basin, called the Garo-Rajmahal gap. With major subduction faults in the north and a major transform fault in the east, the Bengal Basin and its adjacent areas form one

of the most active tectonic regions of the world.<sup>5</sup> The Bengal Basin is divided into two units on the basis of tectonic features and the line of division is the Garo-Rajmahal gap. The Indo-Gangetic plain of which the Bengal Basin is a part is composed of layers of sand, clay and occasional organic debris forming peat beds, that fill up a deep depression, called "fore deep". To the north of the line of division lies the 'fore deep' in front of the Himalayas—it is due to a sag in the northern flank of the Peninsula which developed simultaneously with the uplift of the Himalayas in the Tertiary Period. The other part of the Basin lying to the south of the gap and forming the Gangetic delta proper has been in existence since the beginning of the Mesozoic period and is known as a tectonic trough.<sup>6</sup>

#### (a) *The Bengal Basin*

The Bengal Basin has been filled up by sediments washed down from the highlands and especially from the Himalayas. And the art of land-building process has begun due to the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. E. H. Pascot<sup>7</sup> and G. E. Pilgrim<sup>8</sup> have advanced the hypothesis of an Indo-Brahm or Siwalik river flowing westward and southward to Sind on the basis of the Siwalik deposits (between 1 to 12 million years) in the Indo-Gangetic Valley. The post-Siwalik movements broke this river into the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra. The latter two reversed their flow and found a new course to the sea through the Garo-Rajmahal gap. This theory has been recently challenged by M. S. Krishnan and N. K. Aiyengar,<sup>9</sup> but not seriously

5. Morgan, T.P./McIntire, W.G.—'Quaternary Geology of the Bengal Basin, East Pakistan and India' in *Bulletin of the Society of American* vol. 70 (1959), 319-42.
6. Cnatterjee, G.C.—'Geology and Groundwater resources of the Greater Calcutta Industrial Area, West Bengal' in *Bulletin of the Geological Survey of India, Series B. Engineering Geology & groundwater*, paper no. 21 (1964), 29.
7. 'The Indobrahm' in *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society*, vol. LXXV (1919), 138-55.
8. 'The Siwalik River' in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. XV (1919).
9. 'Did the Indobrahm river exist?' in *Records of the Geological Society of India*, vol. LXXV (1940), paper 6.

shaken. It seems that most of the Bengal Basin was formed in the Pliocene period (7 to 25 million years). During 1957-60 geologists made out that the out-pouring of the basalt flowing on the foreland shelf of Bengal occurred probably in the Late Jurassic and Early Cretaceous time. The volcanic activity synchronised with that in the Rajmahal area of Behar and the South Shillong plateau of Assam. During the Late Cretaceous period this was followed by the slow subsidence of the Bengal shelf area and the marine invasion from the south-east. And argillaceous and arenaceous brackish to lagoonal deposits accumulated on the West Bengal stable shelf, while in the upper Assam valley sedimentation went on under open-marine conditions. During the Late Cretaceous and Middle Eocene time submergence and emergence were repeated in the shelf area and the deeper parts of the stable shelf of West Bengal and Assam passed through marine invasion. On the other hand, in most of the shallow shelf regions fresh-water sedimentation of sandstones and carbonaceous shale continued. The movements, in the basin-margin fault-zone initiated basin-wide subsidence, inviting marine transgression in the Middle to Late Eocene time. And the uniform deposits of nummulitic limestone under the open-marine and warm conditions continued over the entire shelf area of Bengal and the south Shillong plateau.<sup>1</sup>

#### (b) *The tectonic movements*

During the Miocene period Bengal and Assam were subjected to tectonic movements. These caused in the north-east—south-west—trending fault zones rapid submergence of the deeper shelf and geosynclinal parts of the basin. In Bengal the sea invaded the area to the east of the Memari-Ghatal trend and deposition of the dominant argillaceous Miocene sediments (middle part of the Bhagirathi group) took place. And on the stable Bengal shelf deposition under oscillatic, deltaic and shallow marine

10. Sengupta, S.— (i) 'Geological and Geophysical studies in Western part of Bengal Basin, India in *Bulletin of the American Association of Petroleum Geologists*, vol. 50 (1966), 1001-17 ;
- (ii) 'Geology of South-Western Bengal' in *West Bengal*, ed. A. B. Chatterjee. Calcutta (1970). 1-6.

conditions continued. However, during the Late Miocene and early Pliocene times the sea retreated and estuarine and fluvial conditions of deposition prevailed in most of West Bengal. Only very small-scale local marine transgression came in the wake of large-scale Pliocene regression in parts of Bengal. Of course, in early Pleistocene times shallow-marine conditions prevailed in the deeper parts of the Bengal Basin. And in the late Pleistocene did the sea finally recede completely from the Basin. Then came erosion followed by peneplanation of the whole Tertiary basin area of Bengal. Finally, the older sediments were covered completely by a thick mantle of river-borne Holocene alluvium. In recent years frequent earthquakes in the orogenic belts of the eastern Himalayas and the Naga-Lushai Hills, however, suggest that movements are still continuing in the basin and folded belts are yet to attain equilibrium.

By the Miocene period the Himalayas had become a mountain chain, though not a provenance of sediments for the South Bengal basin. Hence, the drainage to the Bengal Basin till the Mid-Pliocene period was from the east and the west. During the Tertiary period the south Bengal delta came into being from the Western side and the sediments carried by the Ajoy-Damodar system of rivers filled up the western margin of the Basin. The Chotanagpur plateau continued to rise in the Tertiary period and sedimentation followed. Successive glaciations took place in the Pleistocene period, resulting in fluctuations of the sea level. In case the ice sheets melt, it would raise the sea level by 65 m and much of Bengal would be flooded. The drop of the sea level would increase the erosive powers of the streams, followed by the greater rate of sedimentation. Corresponding to four glacial and inter-glacial epochs there are four phases of sedimentation in the Pleistocene depositional basin. And this is illustrated by the geological sections through the Greater Calcutta region. The basal deposits are marked by gravel and coarse sand followed by medium sand, fine sand, silt and clay.

It is necessary to remember here that it is not the volume of water, but the velocity of its flow that determines erosion. The eroding power of a stream is proportional to the square of its velocity. In other words  $e \propto v^2$ , where  $e$  = the eroding power and  $v$  = the velocity. But what is not well known is the fact that the capacity of a stream in transporting eroded material

varies as the 6th power of its velocity. Mathematically,  $C_t \propto v^6$ , where  $C_t$  = the transporting capacity. Thus if the velocity increases 10 times, the erosion increases 100 times, while its carrying capacity becomes a million times.

## II. Calcutta and its subsidence

Calcutta is a part of the Bengal Basin. It is underlain by a considerable thickness of predominantly alluvial material of the Quaternary age and overlain by a vast thickness of the Tertiary and probably Mesozoic sedimentation in a subsiding trough. The subsidence in the Calcutta region may be illustrated by (i) two water-well borings, and (ii) four excavations as noted below :

### (a) Water-well borings

One boring was made near the River Hooghly in the vicinity of Calcutta from May to July 1814. From the evidence of rotten wood 32.5 ft. subsidence was found.<sup>11</sup> The second borings were made in Fort William during 1836-40 when 30-50 ft. subsidence was noticed from the evidence of peat and Sundri trees.<sup>12</sup>

### (b) Excavations

There was a tank excavation in the Chowring Road and the decayed wood furnished proof of 35 ft. subsidence.<sup>13</sup> A second such tank excavation in Sealdah showed Sundri trees in situ and a 30 ft. subsidence.<sup>14</sup> A third tank excavation in Port Canning on the Matla River exhibited large trees in place (Sundri) and a subsidence of 10 ft.<sup>15</sup> The fourth excavation took place in

11. East, E.H.—"Abstract of an account, containing the particulars of a boring made near the River Hooghly in the vicinity of Calcutta from May to July 1814 inclusive, in search of a spring of pure water" in *Asiatick Researches*, vol. 12 (1818), 542-47.

12. Smith, Lt.R. Baird—"On the structure of the delta of the Ganges as exhibited by the boring operations in Fort William, AD 1836-40" in *Calcutta Journal of Natural History* vol. 1 (1841), 324-43.

13. Hunter, W.W.—A statistical account of Bengal. Vol. I: Dists. of 24-Pgs. and Surbarans, London, (1875), 291.

King George Dock, wherein was found wood (*Cerriops* sp) with a 40 ft. subsidence.<sup>14</sup>

### III. Fort William borings

There have been 23 borings in and around Fort William during 1804-32. The last boring in the period from December 1835 to April, 1840 reached a depth of 481 feet and the results thereof deserve mention. To a depth of about 10 ft. a stratum of blue clay of 15 ft. in thickness was found. At a distance of 80 ft. lay a bed of peat. At a depth of 120 ft. beds of clay and variegated sand alternated with *Kunkar*, mica and small pebbles. At 152 ft. the quicksand became darker in colour and coarser in grain. At 159 ft. a stiff clay with yellow veins occurred and altered at 163 ft. in colour and substance. The fine sand came out at 170 ft. ; at 196 ft. clay impregnated with iron was passed through. At 221 ft. sand recurred with fragments of lime-stone and *Kunkar* and this continued upto 340 ft. with pieces of quartz and felspar. At 350 ft. a fossil bone of a dog was extracted. A tortoise shell was found at a depth of 360 ft. ; at 372 ft. another fossil bone was discovered. At 392 ft. a few pieces of fine coal with some fragmentary decayed wood were picked out of the sand. A piece of limestone was brought up at 400 ft. At 400-481 ft. fine sand of a sea-shore came out with fragments of primary rocks, quartz, felspar, mica, slate, and limestone.<sup>15</sup>

14. Curtis, S.T.—Working plan for the forests of the Sundarbans division. (1933), Calcutta, Vol. I, parts 1 & 2. 7-22.
15. (a) Mill, H.—'Report of the committee appointed on the 29th March, 1935, to consider the expediency of recommending to the Govt. the continuance of the boring experiment', in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (JASB)*, Vol. 2 (1833), 367-74 ;
- (b) Taylor, T.M.—'Note on the progress of the boring in Fort William', *JASB*, Vol. 5 (1836), 374-5 ;
- (c) Taylor, T.M.—'Report : Progress of the boring experiment in Fort William', *JASB*, Vol. 6 (1837), 234-7 ;
- (d) McLeod, D.—'Abstract Report of the proceedings of the committee appointed to superintend the boring operations in Fort William, from their commencement in December, 1835 to their close in April, 1840', *JASB*, Vol. 9 (1840), 677-87.

In this connection the comments of E. H. Pascoe<sup>16</sup> are interesting ;

- (1) Marine deposits were absent.
- (2) At a depth of 30 ft. below the surface or at about 10 ft. below mean tide level and again at 382 ft. beds of peat and decayed wood were found and these deposits prove the existence of ancient land surface.
- (3) Some of the wood in the upper peat beds is that of Sundri tree (*Heritiera littoralis*), which grows in abundance on the muddy flats of the Ganges delta ; the rest of it is the root of a climbing plant resembling *Bridelia*.
- (4) At a depth of 175-185 ft., between 300 and 325 ft. and again at 395-481 ft., pebbles existed ; and the greater part of these was derived from gneissic rocks, but some fragments of coal and lignite came from the Tertiary or cretaceous coal seams of the Garo Hills.
- (5) Bones of terrestrial mammals and fluviatile reptiles were found ; but at 380 ft. the shell fragments were of fresh-water species.

Recently the deepest boring has been made at Akra Road, Garden Road.<sup>17</sup> In 1938 the boring for a tubewell reached a depth of 1612 ft. The results are interesting. From the lithological evidence it is clear that the beds drilled are all alluvium and their mineral assemblage suggests a recent origin. Apart from the occurrence of high Ilmenite, Hornblende and Garnet, Kyanite and Tourmaline, the presence of Sillimanite is also noticeable.

16. Pascoe, E.H.—*A manual of the Geology of India and Burma*, Vol. III, 1886-88 ; A. K. Banerjee's *Howrah District Gazetteer* (1972). Calcutta, 46-7.
17. Culson, A.L.—'The geology and underground water supply of Calcutta, Bengal with special reference to tubewells' in *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India*, Vol. 76, paper no. 1 (1940), 42, 123-6.



#### IV. The discovery of peat and coal

Peat is a brownish or blackish material produced by the decay of vegetation. It represents the first stage in the transformation of vegetable matter into coal. These woody fragments are plastic—they dry easily and fall to pieces. The peat bed in Calcutta borings at a depth of 1835 ft. seems older than the Hooghly—it appears to have been deposited in an extensive lake or marsh, since silted up and traversed by the river. The overlying clay of the peat bed is marked by fresh-water gastropod shells. No marine or brackish water fauna has been found—it is a fresh water deposit. It is believed that a large amount of partially decayed matter was brought by the river. Mild tectonism supported further sedimentation. There was an assemblage of fossil pollen grains and pores found preserved and this depicts the Late—Quaternary vegetational history.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in 1970 there have been Metro borings, but the results thereof are not interesting from the geological point of view.<sup>19</sup>

The presence of coal below Calcutta is doubted. The coal pebbles found at a depth of 392 ft. at the Fort William borings during 1835-40 were supposed to have come from the Harigaon field in the north-west corner of the Garo Hills, Meghalaya. They were not a lower or an upper Gondwana type of coal and matched with the upper cretaceous and Tertiary coals of Assam. Maybe, these were brought by the old Indobrahm river..<sup>20</sup>

#### V. The fossil remains unearthed

A fossil bone brought up from a depth of 350 ft. during the Fort William borings in 1857 was identified by James Prinsep with that of a dog. Some bones were discovered in the state of blue clay alluvium of the circular canal when dug up to a depth of 20\*ft. Some more bones were discovered in 1813 by Lt. J.

18. Ghosh, A.K. 'A study of Calcutta peat and associated sediments' in *Indian Journal of power & River Valley Development*, Vol. 14 (Feb 1964), 14-25.

19. Ghosh, P.K./Gupta, S.—'Subsoil character of Calcutta Region' in *Proceedings of Third Symposium on application of soil mechanics & foundation engineering in Eastern India* (1972) Calcutta.

20. Culson, op. cit 25-6 ; Fox, C.S.—"Coal in India" in *Memo. Geo. Surv. India.*, Vol. 57, (1931), 49-50. 237-40.

Colvin during the excavation of a tank at Dum Dum. These could not be identified properly ; but it was found that they lay pretty close together, their interstices being filled with earth.<sup>21</sup> The fossils found at a depth of 950 ft. and beyond at the Akra digging were found by M. R. Sahnî to be "estuarine". The genera had been identified to be *Ostrea* and *Meretrix*. The position of Calcutta is such that with a depression of only 30 ft. or so most of the Gangetic delta would be inundated and estuarine shells deposited thereupon. There have been frequent advances and retreats of such estuarine conditions in the formation of the Gangetic delta. The presence of peat and *Kunkar* beds indicates this succession of alternative depression and elevation. And the general movement has been progressive and shows depression concomitantly with the deposition of alluvial matter during the floods by the tributary mouths of the Ganges. It is interesting to note that while depression was going on in the Gangetic delta, there was uplift in Peninsular India to the West and South-West of Calcutta.<sup>22</sup>

The estuarine conditions may be illustrated by the discovery of an old oyster bed 5 or 6 ft. below the foundation of the Clive Buildings, i.e. Gillander House at 8, Netaji Subhas Road in July, 1901-2 and by similar finds in the Diamond Harbour Road in 1980. The *ostrea gryphoides* found at Akra Road, Netaji Subhas Road and Diamond Harbour Road belong to the Miocene period. Semi-fossilised bones of an antelope or a horse of the sub-recent age at Jadavpur were discovered in 1980.<sup>23</sup> Traces of an "animal world", more than 2000 years old were found in a village of Mochpol near Barasat while an old pond was being desilted.<sup>24</sup> The skeletal remains of one-horned rhinos have been recovered from Meenaklanare, Gobra, Calcutta. They point to the alluvial swamps of Calcutta, a thousand years ago.<sup>25</sup> Eleven bones were also found below the Clive Buildings.

## VI. Calcutta as part of the Sundarbans

### (a) *Sundri trees*

The Sundarbans is so called because of the existence and predominance of *Sundri* (*Heritiera minor*) trees in it. The Sundris require frequent flooding for the growth of grass and the exposure of their roots to the air some hours at each tide. Owing to change in climatic conditions they do not grow any more in the western Sundarban delta of West Bengal. However, in the past Calcutta had Sundri trees. And this is evident from the excavation undertaken in some of the areas of Calcutta. Forests of submerged Sundris in situ have been detected at several places such as Curzon Park Tank (1815), Sealdah (1864), Dhakuria Lake (1941) and Salt Lake (1969).<sup>25</sup> They have been found standing upright with their roots embedded in clay. Besides, decayed Sundri trees are discovered along the Metro Railway track.<sup>26</sup>

### (b) *C<sup>14</sup>—dating to ascertain Calcutta's age*

A. K. Ghosh says that there has been a subsidence of an extensive forest which once existed in this area i.e. Dhakuria Lake. The forest has been gradually buried underground by the slow and gradual silting up of the delta of the Ganges. And this gradual process must have taken approximately 2000 years. The plants are identified as *Heritiera Fomes Buch.* commonly known in Bengal as *Simari*, which grow in abundance in the muddy flats of the Gangetic delta. They are now found in the Khulna—Bagerhat forests and the Chittagong tidal tracts of Bangladesh as well as in the tidal forests of Burma. The range of occurrence of these trees is from 2 ft. to about 10 ft. below the high water mark. The occurrence of several other plants

25. (i) Carey, W.H.—The good old days of the honourable John Company (2nd edn. 1905). Vol. I. 339-40 (for Curzon Park);
- (ii) Blandford' H.F.—'Note on a tank section at Sealdah, Calcutta', *JASB*, Vol. 33 (1864).
- (iii) Ghosh, A.K.—'Submerged forests in Calcutta', *Science & Culture*, Vol. 6, 668-70 (for Dhakuria Lake);
- (iv) Chanda, S./Mukherjee, B.B.—'Radio Carbon dating of deposits in & around Calcutta' *Science & Culture* Vol. 135 (June 1969).
26. *The Statesman*, May, 1976: 'Old Coins dug out of Tank disappear' (for Maidan); P. T. Nair's 'Calcutta in the 17th century' (1986), 11.

from the peat-soil round about Calcutta with the *Sundri* furnishes us with 'an interesting history of the palaeo-geography of the city of Calcutta and its suburbs'.

Two deposits in and around Calcutta—(1) Sample No. T—730 of Bagirhat along the Diamond Harbour Road, 9 km from South Calcutta, taken from a depth of 5.5 metres from the surface; (2) Sample No. T—729 of Salt Lake, East Calcutta, taken from a depth of 8.5 metres from the surface—were sent in 1969 to the Technical University, Trondheim, Norway for radio-carbon dating. In both the cases the bottom of the pit ranged from 22 to 25 metres from the surface. And the opinion obtained from the experts is that the first sample is dated  $5080 \pm 110$  years, while the second is  $4930 \pm 120$  years.

On this evidence Chanda and Mukherjee conclude: "A typical swamp-type of vegetation including mangroves thrived in and around Calcutta at least 3000 years ago from today, which very much resemble the present-day vegetation (without *Heritiera* in the western part). Perhaps, with the rise of land as a result of continued river silting and increased population the forest has since migrated southwards giving rise to the swampy forest of the present day Sundarbans".

## VII. Calcutta as a human settlement

### (a) Palynological evidence

The palynological studies of the peat from a depth of 72 to 82 ft. in Bagirhat and Salt Lake reveal a fossil pollen assemblage

27. (a) Chanda, S.—'Late Quaternary vegetational history of Eastern Region'.
- (b) Chanda, S. Chatterjee, H.—'Dispersed pollen as indicator of Palaeoenvironment in quaternary' in *Aspects & Appraisal of Indian Palaeobotany*, 608-14/651-56.
- (c) Chanda, S./Mukherjee, B.B.—*Science & Culture*, Vol. 35, 275-6.
- (d) Mukherjee, B.B.—(i) 'Quaternary pollen analysis as a possible indicator of prehistoric agriculture in the deltaic part of West Bengal. In' in *Journal of Palaeontology* Vol. 8 (1972), 144-51;
- (ii) 'Pollen analysis of a few quaternary deposits of lower Bengal Basin' in *proceedings of the Seminar on Palaeobotany & Indian Stratigraphy* (1972), 357-74.

of both arboreal and non-arboreal pollen types. The latter comprise both wild and cultivated grass of fluctuating concentrations. The arboreal pollen types come from vegetation of a mixed swamp forest consisting of *Heritiera*, *Bauhinia*, *Rhizophora* etc. The non-arboreal pollen types come mainly from *Gramineae* (wild and cultivated), *Gyneraceae*, *Caryophyllaceae* etc. The existence of the cereal type of pollen grains associated with *Plantago*, *Ammania*, *Tinospora* etc. indicates early human settlement. However, geological data do not warrant such a conclusion in the absence of macro-fossils of seeds, carbonised remains of foodgrains, charcoal etc.

It is evident that the swampy condition of Calcutta 5000 years ago did not permit human settlement. The presence of fossil pollens of wild grasses and possibly cultivated grasses in the peat beds without association of pollens or fossil remains or cultivated trees and human artefacts was due to the tidal condition of the swamp. However, the existence of 1000-year old rice plants in the peat indicates human settlement about 1500 years ago.<sup>28</sup>

#### (b) Numismatic evidence

Two hoards of Gupta Coins—Kalighat (1783) and Hasnan (1883)—have been discovered. The first contains 200 gold coins, including those of Narasimhagupta (467-473 A.D.), Kumargupta (473-474 A.D.) and others. The obverse of the Coins depicted the king as an archer with a standard surmounted with the head of the bird Garuda on the right and the goddess Lakshmi seated on a lotus on the reverse.<sup>23</sup> The second hoard was found at Hasnan, at a distance of 3 miles south-west of Dadpur, Hooghly. It had 13 gold Gupta coins of (1) Chandragupta II (380-413 A.D.) ; (2) Kumargupta I (415-455 A.D.) ; and others. Coins are mostly of the archer type. Kumargupta I's one Coin is of the Horseman type (obverse and goddess feeding a peacock on the reverse).<sup>29</sup>

These two hoards go to show that Calcutta came to be inhabited from the 5th century A.D.

28. Nair, op. cit. 17.

29. Press Note no. 1087(200) IPR/P dt Calcutta, 22 Sept. 1976 issued by the News Bureau, Information & Public Relations Deptt. Govt. of West Bengal.

### (c) *The discovery of artefacts*

In 1882 the Indian Museum discovered two basalt artefacts with figures of tortoise on it. They symbolised the *Kurma Avatara* of Vishnu, the second incarnation out of his ten *avatars*, others being fish, boar, lion-man, dwarf, Parashuram, Ramchandra, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. They were discovered from Dhapa near Calcutta—a place inhabited by fishermen at the time.

Besides, a sandstone head of Vishnu of the Gupta period and basalt Vishnu image have been recovered from Behala and Barisha respectively and preserved in the Indian Museum as Calcutta specimens of archaeological interest.-

### (d) *The legend and tradition*

(i) *Tectonics*—The modern tectonics had its counterpart in the Indian legend relating to the formation of land and water. And this is described by Kavirama (16th century) in his *Digvijaya Prakasha* thus : “During the churning of the ocean, *Kurma* (the tortoise) too heavily pressed by the Mandara mountain on his back and by *Ananta* (the infinite represented by Shesha-naga, the king of serpents), gasped out a deep breath in order to stupefy the *Daityas* (demons) ; and the country of ‘*Kilkila*’ was formed ; and it extended over the whole tract covered by his breath”. This country of ‘*Kilkila*’ was described as of 21 *iojanas* i.e. 160 square-miles with the Saraswati on the West and Yamuna on the east. It contained the towns and villages of Hooghly, Barueria, Bhatpara, Khardaha, Sialdaha, Govindapur etc.<sup>50</sup> The nomenclature of some places indicates that the Calcutta region was once a tidal swamp. Thus *Sealdaha* (Sialdaha) means the island of the jackals, *Chakdaha*, the Circular island, *Ariadaha*, the island of the Aryas, *Khardaha*, the spear-shaped island and the like.

(ii) “*Samatata*”—Varahamihir (c. 6th century A.D.) designated Lower Bengal as *Samatata* or tidal swamp in his *Brihat Samhita*. Now *Samatata* literally means “level of the sea” and it applies to a tidal swamp on its foreshore. The ‘*Samatata*’ had been raised by alluvium high enough to form a small kingdom. Bengal was divided into a number of States, when Hien Tsang travelled

the country at 638 A.D. One of the States was "Samatata, comprising the delta of the Ganges to the east of the present Hooghly river."<sup>31</sup> The Chinese traveller mentions, besides Kajangala (territory round Rajmahal), four Kingdoms, namely, Pundravardhana, Karnasubarna, Samatata, and Tamralipti.<sup>32</sup> These divisions left an uninhabited area on the south between Tamralipti (Midnapur) and Samatata, which was "south of Kamrupa, 600 miles in circuit". East Bengal had then become populated, though not much above the sea-level, while Southern Bengal was still an uninhabitable tidal swamp.<sup>33</sup>

### VIII. The origin of Calcutta's nomenclature

#### (a) *Govindapur and Sutanuti*

To Shakespeare's query 'What's in a name?'<sup>34</sup> Hobbes gives the answer thus : "A *name* is a word taken to serve for a mark, which may raise in our minds a thought like to some thought we had before, and which, being pronounced to others, may be a *sign* to them of what thought the speaker had before in his mind".<sup>35</sup> The principle of naming contains within a 'thought' that becomes manifest to others as a 'sign'. This may be noticed in the names of Govindapur (Govindpur), Sutanuti (Sutanuti) and Kalkatah (Calcutta). The first two are traceable in the context of the changes in the course of the river Hooghly. The Nadia river began to silt up and a big 'char' (island) formed at Halisahar opposite to Tribeni near Satgaon. This gradually reduced the Jamuna to a narrow nullah. The Saraswati, the channel of communication between Satgaon, the great trade emporium and other parts of the country also started shrinking. The eastern bank of the Bhagirathi, that deepened and widened in its lower reaches, became fit for cultivation and residence because of alluvial deposits. The Bhagirathi became the new Ganges that fell into the Bay of Bengal. And the migration took place of fishermen and cultivators from the upper riparian regions into these

31. Majumdar, R. C.—History of Ancient Bengal (Reprint, 1974), 36

32. Watters, T (tr.)—On Yuan Chwang's travels in India. (1940), II 182-93.

33. Ray, op. cit. 1-2,

34. Romeo and Juliet, II. ii. 43.

35. Computation or logic, C. ii. § 4.

new formations. Nikaris, Jalias and Pundrakshatriyas—all fishermen by profession, used to anchor their boats in the creeks adjoining the above three named villages. The ancestors of the Mondals of Kotalpur near Baruipur were amongst the early settlers in Calcutta.<sup>36</sup>

When the Saraswati at Satgong showed insipient signs of silting up, some people of that place, especially the mercantile and trading classes felt the necessity of removing elsewhere. Thus five opulent merchant families—one of Setts and four of Bysacks—emigrated to Govindpur. Here they cleared the jungles and settled down. Besides, they built houses and set up the shrine of their tutelary deity, Govindjee. To commemorate this name, the new settlement was called Govindpur. The deity is still worshipped in the Thakurbari within the *demesnes* of Baistab Das Sett, east of the mint. The place where Govindpur grew up is the site of the present Fort William. It extended from the Calcutta *Khal* (creek) to the Govindpur Nullah (Tolly's nullah) and covered the whole of the *maidan* of the present day. It was once the dense forest of *Sundri* trees. This jungle was intersected by numerous creeks and water courses. The muddy yellow waters of the Hooghly swept in with the rising tide or ebbed with the drainage of the surrounding rain-drenched country. And the place was haunted by wild beasts and armed bands of robbers. The five families emigrated nearly 425 years ago and the first patriarchs who landed at Govindpur with their families are named below with the number of generations upto date :

Patriarch's name	No. of generations	Name of gotras
1. Makundaram Sett	21	Maudgalya
2. Kali Das Bysack	20	Agnivesma
3. Siva Das Bysack	19	Allodri Rishi
4. Barpati Bysack	19	Amba Rishi
5. Basudeva Bysack	19	Brahma Rishi. <sup>37</sup>



The name '*Sutanuti*' (Chuttanutty) is derived from *Suta*, thread and *nuti*, a hank. It has been fancifully translated *Cottonpolis*.<sup>38</sup> The site is at present occupied by the northern portion of the town. The riverbank at this point has changed less than is the case lower down. So, Hathkola is the position of the village and Mohunton's ghat that of Chuttanutty Ghat, the actual spot on which Charnock landed with his companions. The Setts and Bysacks established a cloth market named Sutanuti Hat—it was a mart for the sale of skeins of thread and woven cloth. From this the village was called Sutanuti. In the earlier sanads this Sutanuti hat was mentioned.

(b) *Kolkata, Kalikata*

(i) *Kol and Kata*—Three elements—Sutanuti, Kolkata, Govindpur—form the nuclei of the present metropolis of Calcutta. The derivation of the first and the third has been shown and the 'thought' underlying them revealed. It is now necessary to find out how Calcutta was named. Sutanuti lay to the north and Govindpur to the south. In between them lay this land called *Calcutta* in English and *Kalkatah* in Persian. The middle portion was marked by indentation in the coastline because of creeks and inlets. To denote this a Bengali word was used—it was named 'kol-kata'. The word 'kol' means 'shore', 'coast', while 'kata' denotes 'cut-open'. The two words thus connote 'coast or shore 'cut open' by creeks and inlets. The lexicographer, Jnanendra Mohan Das means by 'kol' what is 'silted up into a shoal'.<sup>39</sup> Jogendranath Bhattacharya derives 'Kolkata' from a combination of 'kol' and 'kata' thus : "The word *Kol* literally means 'lap' (and) is usually used to denote the open ends of the alluvial formations which are formed on the sides of the rivers of Bengal by the deflection of their currents. The *kols*, as they exist, are used as natural harbours. But the peninsulas surrounding them are, after some years, cut through by changes in the course of the river. The place is then called *kata kol* or *kol-kata*, literally a lap cut open".<sup>40</sup> There are many villages known

by this name, '*kolkata*'. It may be noted, however, that the name of the place is not derived from 'Khal + katta, 'since the *khal* was a natural canal'. The meaning of '*khal kata*' is given in the Dictionary thus : "To dig a canal by taking out earth".<sup>41</sup> This act is 'artificial' as contrasted with the 'natural' act in '*Kolkata*'. Hence, such an observation as this is untenable so far as the semantics of the Bengali language is concerned : "Since the *Khal* was a natural canal, it was called *khal + katta* in order to distinguish it from other excavated canals around".<sup>42</sup> Probably the author has been led by the interpretation of Mrs. Blechynden who has stated : "The name may have originated from the position of the village on the bank of the *khal*, *khal-katta*, where the creek or stream had cut its way in some great flood or had been cut by the villagers to drain their low-lying fields".<sup>43</sup> Here '*kutta*' includes both the natural and artificial senses. But normally '*kata*' refuses to be associated with '*khal*' in its natural flow. On the other hand, '*kolkata*' is a happy combination.

(ii) *Two creeks*—There were two canals or creeks that separated Kalkata from Govindpur and from Sutanuti. The three places extended along the river Hooghly from Chitpur to about Cooly Bazar and the town Calcutta from about 100 yards north of Clive Street to Babu ghat. Since the fort (old) occupied a part of the ground of Calcutta, the whole settlement was named after it. Near the southern limit of Calcutta, there was a creek running from Chandpalghat to Ballia-ghat near the Salt Lakes. Orme called it "a deep miry gully". The creek took its course before the Government house and across Dharamtollah (Lenin Sarani) towards Wellington Square. There was a ditch to the south of Beitak Khanah which showed traces of the continuation of this creek (*Kolkata*). And the creek was named the Creek Row. But its native name was Dinga Bhanga : this name originated in the wrecking at that place of a ship during the terrible cyclone of 1737 that had been driven up by a storm-wave from the river.<sup>44</sup> Another canal went eastward along the northern bound-

dary of Calcutta. Probably, this may be traced in the name, Jora-Sako, meaning "river-bridge"—it did not mean "double bridge" or 'Jugal-Setu'. Suniti Chatterjee explains this as due to "a Sanskritising tendency", that tried "to give these names a Sanskrit look". These are noticeable in 'Yugal-setu' for 'Jora-Sako', 'Kali-Ksetra' for 'Kalikata'.<sup>45</sup> There were bridges over the southern and northern canals to connect Govindpur and Sutanuti with Calcutta. Kalighat and Calcutta were two distinct places and they exist as such even now. It is thus illogical and unhistorical to confuse them.

Thus 'Kolkata' is derived from a combination of 'kol', 'lap' and 'kata', 'cut open'—'t' is transformed into 'i'. Both are unvoiced unaspirated plosive sound ; but the first is alveolo-retroflex, while the second dental. This change of sound takes place because of physiological reasons. Euphony and economy efforts are at the root of pronunciation. Hence, 'kolkata' becomes 'Kalikata' in chaste Bengali in terms of the phonetic law. Under it 'a' becomes 'o' when followed by 'i' or 'u'. So 'kol'  $k + o + l = k + a + u(i) + l$  and  $kali = k + a + l + i$ . In the latter 'a' is pronounced as 'o' because of the combination of 'a' and 'i'

(iii) *The earliest reference in Bengali literature*—'Kolkata' does not appear in the Bengali literature prior to the 17th century. The earliest reference to it is found in a manuscript of *Padmavati* written by Alaul at about 1664 A.D. and kept in the Calcutta University Library. In it the name is 'Calghatta'. In the words of Dinesh Chandra Sen : "On the last page of *Padmavati* by Alawal we find the name of 'Calcutta' written as 'Calghatta'". Bipradas Pipilai is said to have written his *Manasamangal* in 1495 A.D. Here *Kalikata* and *Kalighat* are two different places. It is said that Chand Sadagar visited the Shiva of Kalika at Kalighat after passing Calcutta. But A. K. Ray has recorded that the deity was originally installed at Post Bazar as Chittreswari at Chitpur.<sup>47</sup> However, the tablet at the temple states that it was "founded in 1586". There are other incongruities that question the veracity of Bipradas's statement. The manuscript

is of the first half of the 18th century. Hence Sukumar Sen says : "I consider the name of Kalikata a later insertion. Asutosh Bhattacharyya also holds the same opinion in his *History of Mangala Kavya* (1950, at 219) namely, that Calcutta and all other names are later insertions. Mukundram Chakravarty's *Chandi Kavya* (1580-85) is said to contain the names of *Kalighat* and *Kalikata*. But in a critical edition of his book by Akshaya Kumar Sarkar this passage is not found. Moreover, D. C. Sen has questioned the visit of Srimanta Sadagar".<sup>48</sup>

In this context, the first-mentioned name is 'Calighatta'. It is the Persian version of 'Kolcatta'—the version is of the colloquial Bengali term '*Kalkata*'. The law of this change may be stated in the words of G. D. Bysack thus : "In *urduising* Bengali compound words generally, the terminal vowel of the first member is dropped, the medial of the second when long, is shortened, and the final consonant is doubled. We have, therefore, from the Bengali '*kali-kata*', by eliding *i*, shortening the medial *a*, and doubling *t*, the urdu form as pronounced, though in the *Ain-i-Akhari* it is spelt '*Kalkatta*'".<sup>49</sup> Admiral Stavorinus states in *A voyag to the Cape of Good Hope, Batavia, Bantam, and Bengal with observations on those parts, in the year 1768-1771* (at p. 493) : "Calcutta or *Coulicatta*, as it is called by the Moers (Muslims) is the Capital of the English in Bengal".<sup>50</sup> It may be noticed that 'Coulicatta' resembles 'Kolcatta' more than 'Calighatta'. In Persian 'k' becomes aspirated and 'c' turns into long 'u' and the stress falls on the last letter.

#### (c) '*Kalkata*' in other languages

1. *Persian*—Calcutta finds mention in the Persian language in the *Bainama* or deed of transfer executed on November 10, 1698 (O.S.), by the junior branch of the Savarna Raichaudhuri in favour of the East India Company. The Persian document reads thus : "We conjointly have sold and made a true and legal conveyance of the village of *Dihī Kalkatah*, and *Sutanur* within the jurisdiction of *parganah Amirat*, ' and village Govindpur

under the jurisdiction of *parganah Paeqan* and *Kalkatah*, to the English company".<sup>51</sup> The document reveals that Calcutta was then a *dih*i (village) as well as a *parganah*.

Earlier the *Ain-i-Akhari* of Abul Fazle embodied a copy of Raja Todur Mull's *Asl-i-Jama Tumar* or rent-roll compiled in 1582. In the rent-roll Bengal was divided into 19 Sirkars and 682 mahals or revenue-divisions. One of the Sirkars was Sirkar Satgaon. A small portion only, the land between the Hooghly and the Saraswati lay west of the Hooghly, while the bulk of the Sirkar comprised the district of 24-parganahs to the kapadak, western Nadia, south-western Murshidabad and extended in the south to Hatiagarh below Diamond Harbour. The 35th mahal is mentioned under the name of *Kalkatta* (Calcutta), which together with the 36th and 37th Mahals paid a land-revenue of Rs. 23,905.<sup>52</sup>

## 2. Calcutta in English

Calcutta is first mentioned in a letter dated Dacca, June 22, 1688 written by Charles Eyre and Rogger Braddyll to the Agent, Job Charnock. It reads thus : "He (the Nawab) will grant us his parwanna also for building at Calcutta with ground sufficient for a town or two as you desire".<sup>53</sup> In the second letter dated Dacca, July 9, 1689 to Elihu Yale the President of the Company at Madras, 'Calcutta' is mentioned twice.<sup>54</sup> Of course Job Charnock did not use 'Calcutta' in his correspondence during 1686-87, but a number of his letters show 'Chutanuttee'. However, he thrice used 'Calcutta' in his comments on Capt. Heath's adventures in the file dated March 22, 1689. Earlier Capt. Heath used it thrice in his account of proceedings dated August, 16, 1688.<sup>55</sup>

51. Ray, op. cit. Persian at 61-2 and the English translation by W. Irvine at 66-7.

52. Blochmann, H.—Contributions to the geography and history of Bengal (1968), 9.

53. Records of Fort St. George : Letters to Fort St. George for 1688. Public Sundries no. 3, Madras 1915, at 91.

54. Rankin, J. T.—'Dacca Diaries' in Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (New Series) : Vol. XVI (1920) no. 41, 120-24.

55. Yule, H.—The diary of William Hedges, Vol. II, 81, 79. (O.C. 5564/5663).

### 3. *The name in Hindusthani and other languages*

Calcutta is the anglicised version of 'Kolkatah'. The Hindusthanis pronounce it as 'Kolkatta' or 'Kolkata'. In West Bengal the pronunciation is 'Kolkatta', 'Kolketta', 'Kolketa' and in Bangladesh it is 'Koilkata', 'Koilkatta', while the Oriyas call it 'Koliketa'.<sup>56</sup>

The Europeans take the English name 'Calcutta' as their basis and try to produce in their language sounds similar to it. Thus the Germans have 'Kalkutta', the Dutch 'Collecatte', and the French 'Calcutta'.

#### (d) *Calcutta in maps*

The first authentic map of India was published by D'Anville in 1752 when the exploration of the then unknown India was largely in the French hands. It shows the Hooghly where 'Calicotta' (Calcutta), the Bengala R(iver) and Calcutta R(iver) are shown.<sup>57</sup> And 'Calicotta' is derived from 'Kolkatta'.

Van den Broucke's map is dated 1660 A.D. He was the Dutch Chief during 1662-64 at the Hooghly and could not publish his map during his lifetime. However, Valentijn printed it in his account of East Indies in 1726. He described Calcutta thus: "The ships which sail thither (to Hagli) first pass by the English Lodge in *Collecatte* 9 miles (Dutch) lower down ours, and after that the French one called Chandarnagar". Valentijn's accurate description of Calcutta, it is said, betrays Van den Broucke's authorship of the map. N. K. Bhattasali and J. M. Ghosh have questioned the authenticity of the map.<sup>58</sup> There is thus no reference to Calcutta in the maps or charts of Englishmen prior to 1703. However, the early charts and topography of the Hooghly river have been included by Henry Yule in the 3rd volume of the *Diary of William Hedges* (Vol. III. 196-220).

56. Chatterji, S. K.—'The derivation of the name Calcutta (Bengali) Sahitya Parishad Patrika, 45th year, 1st no. B. S. 1345.

57. National Library of India, Calcutta—catalogue no. M.P. 954 An 94; Nair's *Calcutta in the 17th cent* (1986), at 335.

58. Valentijn, Vol. V, 162; Yule/Burnell-Hobson-Jobson (Reprint 1986), 146.

59. *Bengal Past and Present*, Jan-March, 1936 'old Calcutta'; J. M. Ghosh—*Magh Raiders on Bengal* (1960), 114.

The first Hooghly pilot George Herron drew the map of Hooghly probably in 1690.<sup>60</sup>

(e) *Kalighat v. Kalikata or Calcutta*

(i) *Kali and ghat as the source*—Kalighat means the landing place to the goddess Kali. This goddess was installed at the present place in 1809. Hence, Kalighat and Kalikata are two distinct places and the latter was not derived from the former before Job Charnock. Nor could the former give its name to the latter at the time of Todar Mull. Hence, the contention of Bholanath Chunder is not tenable. He says : "It is in the corruption of Kalighat into 'the Moslemised Kalikata' of the *Asl-i-Jama Tumar* that we must look for the derivation of the Anglicised Calcutta of the present day".<sup>61</sup> Similarly, untenable is the contention of D. C. Sen when he states : "The word 'Calcutta' (Kalikata) is not derived from the word 'Kalighat' as the Bengalis pronounce it, but from *Kalighatta*, the form by which the up country people used to designate it".<sup>62</sup> The reasons may be given in the words of G. D. Bysack thus : "It is natural to suppose that the name of our city originated in Bengal, and not in upper India. To suppose now that the Sanskrit Kalighatta had first passed into the Bengali form *Kalighata*, on the Tantrik authority of the former name, and then from the latter into Kalikata, would necessitate the shortening of the *a* of *kali*, transmitting the *gha* of *ghat* into *k*, and prolonging the terminal, *a*. All this with the exception of the prolongation is against linguistic rules ; not to mention the fact that names of places, having *ghata* or their terminal member, have been preserved not only in Bengali, but also in Urdu. No Hindu will corrupt, in hasty utterance, much less in writing the name of a universally worshipped deity as *kali* into *kali* or *kol*. The derivation of Calcutta, therefore, from *kalighat* or *Kalikshetra* and etc. is philologically, and from a religious point of view, impossible".<sup>63</sup> In

60. Nair op. cit., 56.

61. Chunder, B.—Calcutta University Magazine, Vol. IV, no. 1, Jan. 1897, 175 (*Keepsake*, 6).

62. Sen, D. C.—Calcutta Review (1918), 68-9 ; Glimpses of Bengal life, 116.

63. Bysack, G. D.—'Kalighat and Calcutta' in *Keepsake*, 27-8.

this light he rules out "the imaginary derivation of Calcutta" from *koli-kota* (fort of Kali), *kali-kutte* (destroying kali), *kaii-kartri* and the like. Here one must remember the caveat uttered by G. Oppert: "The derivation of names of Indian localities from Sanskrit words, as is usually done, should be discontinued, unless such derivations are well-supported".<sup>64</sup>

(ii) *Kali and kata in combination*—S. K. Chatterjee<sup>65</sup> tries to derive 'Kalikata' from a combination of the two terms—*kali* (wet lime) and *kata* (kiln). According to him, 'Kalikata' is a pure Bengali word. It is derived from *kali* (wet lime) for the preparation of which *kata* or the burning of snail shells is required. Just as *Sutanuti* developed from the cotton-market of *Soota* (thread) and *nooty* (bundles), so is *kalikata* formed from *kali* and *kata*. This is an old theory decried by G. D. Bysack while writing in 1892 an article on Calcutta in the 'Visvakosha'; "The derivation of kalikata from kali (lime) is an act of ready brain; one need not pay heed to such rattles".<sup>66</sup> This derivation is untenable for the following reasons. *First*, there is no record to prove that lime was ever prepared in Bow Bazar area. When the construction of buildings started in Calcutta at a later age, lime was imported from Sylhet (Bangladesh) or Madras. *Second*, the first mention of Chuna(m) Gulli occurs in Aaron Upjohn's map of Calcutta in 1792-93. *Chunam* comes from the Malayam *Chun-namba*, while *Chuna* from the Sanskrit *Cirna*. *Third*, *Chuna* means 'inferior', 'narrow'. Hence, *Chunagulli* means a narrow lane. Consequently, the names—'Chunagulli', 'Chunapukur' and 'Chunaritolla'—have no connection with lime. *Finally*, history as pointed out by Garfield, has "two eyes—geography and chronology". If chronology is not maintained, history becomes eyeless and turns into anachronism. In the present context, the events of a later period like lime (*kali*) to indicate an earlier state is anachronistic, illogical, and unscientific. And this is unacceptable. Still it is considered "a good case" by a recent historian, without proof of "widespread lime industry" in the olden time.<sup>66</sup>



(iii) *A compound of 'khal' and 'kata'*—'Khal' comes from Sanskrit 'khalla' and means a 'canal'. In Prakrita the word is 'khal' and in Dravidian languages 'kal', meaning a small or narrow canal.<sup>67</sup> And 'kata' means 'cut'. From these two words —'khal' and 'kata'—Mrs. Blechynden derives *Kalikata* (Calcutta) : "There seems no apparent reason why the name may not have originated from the position of the village on the bank of the *khal*, *khal-kutta*, where the creek or stream had cut its way in some great flood, or had been cut by the villagers to drain their low-lying fields".<sup>68</sup> Recently this is endorsed by Shri P.T. Nair<sup>69</sup> on the following grounds. *First*, the village, *khalkutta* had been in existence before Charnock. *Second*, the tradition has it, as recorded by A. K. Ray in his *Short history of Calcutta* (p. 6, note) that the Clive Street ground was raised by an earthquake, which at the same time added depth to the *khal*. *Finally*, there is a difference between *khal + kutta*, meaning "a canal formed by nature" and *kata-khal* or "man-made canal". But these arguments cannot bear scrutiny. In the first place, there is no record to show that 'khal-kutta' was the name of the village on the *khal*. It is only Mrs. Blechynden's guess-work. *Secondly*, she confuses a human act with an act of nature. *Khal-kutta* is connected only with a human act and never with a natural act so far as the *khal* is concerned. *Thirdly*, A. K. Ray did not specifically mention the deepening of this *khal*, although the natural process of elevation and subsidence went on. Moreover, he has talked about the silting-up of the eastern canals and rivers. *Fourthly*, the past participle *kata* used as an adjective refers only to man-made act, but not to natural act except in certain rare combinations like 'kol-kata' i.e., lap cut open by nature. *Finally*, it is not explained how the aspirate 'kh' in *khal* can become non-aspirate 'k' when the Bengali accent falls on the first letter. Besides, no reason is given for the transformation of 'a' into 'o', or for the coming of 'i' after 'l'. In this context, such a derivation seems unacceptable.

(iv) *Kol-ka-hata as the source*—G. D. Bysack has suggested “a theory possessing a shade of historic plausibility” as follows : “Calcutta was derived, in its chaste Bengali form, *Kalikata* and vulgar, *Kolkata* from *koli-ka-hata* (Hindi) and *Kol-ka-hata* (Hindi), meaning the settlement of the *Kolis* or *Kols*”.<sup>62</sup> This is untenable, since the *Kol* population even in 1951 was only 86 in Calcutta.

(v) *‘Kalkatah’ and Calcutta from ‘Kolkata’*—As explained already, the middle of the three villages in the *Bainama* was known to the people as *‘kolkata’* i.e. lap cut open. It was the place of indented coast, that is, a place where the sea indents the coast and forms deep recesses in it. In Bengali *‘kol’* and *‘kata’* form a compound known as *Bahubrihi Samasa* that refers to a third thing, having the two characteristics, namely, *kol* (coast) and *‘kata’* (having a toothlike indentation).<sup>63</sup> For the sake of euphony, *‘t’* becomes *‘t’*. The dents made by the river Hooghly are the so-called *cracks* and canals passing through the middle village, that took its name from these *‘Kolkata’*. *‘Kalkatah’* is its Persianised name, whereas *‘Calcutta’* its Anglicised name.

#### (vi) *Calcutta in space-time-continuum*

Space-time is the basis of the theory of relativity. Its continuum—S.T.C.—means that ‘three dimensions of space merge in one dimension of time’. The origin of Calcutta against this background is interesting, and this has been shown by Nilesh Biswas in his book of poetry named *‘Kali-Kali-Kalikatah’* (1973) thus :

- There must be clue to this, in ‘the square root of minus one’ ;  $\sqrt{-1}$  ;

Which can bind time with a space map.

.. .. .

Time turns into space because of the square root of minus one,

Kali and Kali bind themselves in a coil under the name of Calcutta.

This finds support from A. S. Eddington's '*Space, Time and Gravitation*' (1921, p. 48) :

"The mysterious factor  $\sqrt{-1}$  seems to have the property of turning time into space".

Herein is seen Hegel's dialectic in operation : time has advanced in thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis and become transformed into space. And the catalytic agent has seen  $\sqrt{-1}$ . The three phases have been marked by three rods—the rod of balance (1633) ; the rod of force (1661-85) ; and the royal rod (1686-90). In the words of the poet :

On the Hegelian dialectic took place the foundation of  
Calcutta :

Thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis.

Calcutta shows three folds in seed-sapling-tree.

On 24-August 1690 a town was founded as Calcutta.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FOUNDING OF CALCUTTA

The ideas are what I called the *Zeitgeist*. All the thinking and feeling in an epoch constitute the spirit of the Age ; and everything in history is the result of this. Great men have efficacy only when they are the unconscious instruments of the *Zeitgeist*. The genius whom posterity acclaims may not have been greater than his predecessors ; they too had placed their stones upon the pile ; but somehow he has the good fortune to come last, and when he places his stone the arch stands self-supported. Such individuals had no consciousness of the general Idea they were unfolding, but they had an insight into the requirements of the time ; they knew what was ripe for development. Great men, therefore, are not so much creators as midwives ; they help time to bring forth that which is already in the womb.

—Will Durant : *The Measures of Philosophy*, (1953), 232-33.

There is a Hegelian dialectic that connects the different stages of the English advance into Bengal. And this is explained below :

#### I. Hegel's dialectic

According to Hegel, pure thought needs a method of progression, which is an oscillation. The concept itself constitutes "the abstract moment" and at once goes over to its opposite and thereby dissolves itself and constitutes "the dialectic moment". However, out of this affirmation, which is also denial—the concept of an object and of its opposite—arises a third which is the unity of these mutual dissolutions as the truth of both and constitutes "the speculative or positive rational moment".<sup>1</sup>

1. Berolzheimer, F.—*The World's Legal Philosophies* (1929), 220.

Now, Hegel's dialectic is the consistent elaboration of Kant's rationalism with a Fictian tone, that is, Fichte's dialectic of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. Hegel's three "moments" are known by the triad of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. The Hegelian method is offered to us as an instrument by which the human mind can reach truth. This may be illustrated as follows. Some one may have a particular idea which is wrong. It can be shown to be self-contradictory, since there exists an opposite doctrine which denies and refutes it. Now the opposed doctrine can be shown to be faulty and self-contradictory. Therefore, a third doctrine may unite on a higher plane the essential features of both the original doctrine and its opposite. And the process is called "the Hegelian Dialectic" and the combination of two partial doctrines and a third in which they are united is known as "the Triad".<sup>2</sup>

## II. The English advance as dialectic

The advance of the English into Bengal, illustrated the invariable law of development known as the Hegelian dialectic. There are four stages in it. The first period (1633-1660) was marked by commerce carried on by the English under the protection of the Indian Government. This was a moment of necessity to break the Portuguese monopoly of trade and to direct commerce to their advantage. This was followed by its contradiction in the second period (1661-1685) in which industrialism was opposed by militarism. The English merchants were confronted with three types of obstacles—(i) conflicts with the Muslim rules ; (ii) conflicts with interloping rivals ; and (iii) conflicts amongst themselves. By the end of the second period the anti-thesis of the first position was reached. The English ignored the promises of the Indian Government and resolved to establish themselves in Bengal by force. Then came the third period (1685-1690) of flux. The English wandered from one policy to another and from one station to another. After repeated trials they returned to Bengal at the invitation of the Nabob, Ibrahim Khan and formed a fortified settlement at Calcutta.

This satisfied the claims of both industrialism and militarism. The fourth period started from 1690 and the settlement took a definite shape. And English trade was established in Bengal *partly*, through the goodwill of the inhabitants of the country and with the acquiescence of the native government and *partly* by the powerful position the English had acquired. They commanded the sea, they dominated the river traffic from Patna to Saugor and behind the river they were safely established at Calcutta.

These four stages are in a necessary concatenation. One can see in them respectively the *sein*, *rechts*, *werden*, and *dasein* of English commerce in Bengal.

### III. The European trading

#### (a) *The Portuguese*

European interest in India had persisted since classical times for very cogent reasons. She had to give Europe in the form of spices, textiles and other products. With the fall of Rome direct contact was lost and the trade was carried on by the Muslim Arabs. It should be noted that the spice trade at the time was not a luxury trade. Spices were needed to preserve meat through the winter to combat the taste of decay. And wine had to be 'mulled' with spices. This trade faced two threats—the threats of Mongol and Turkish invasion in the land routes and that of the sea route through Egypt. To counteract these were the crusading zeal against the Muslim and the commercial zeal against spice monopolies that sent Columbus to America in 1492 and Vasco da Gama to Calicut in 1498. He told the first Indians he met on the Malabar coast that he came to seek "Christians and spices".<sup>1</sup> Thence followed the Portuguese empire in India. Vasco da Gama claimed for his master the sovereignty of the Indian seas and he came into conflict with the ruler of Calicut. The Portuguese withdrew from this port and established themselves at Cochin, whose ruler gave them

help because of rivalry between him and the Zamorin. The naval engagement (1503) was indecisive in point of fighting, but decisive from the political view-point. The Calicut fleet was not a high seas navy and as such it failed to meet the Portuguese challenge. With Alfonso Albuquerque (1510-16) the position underwent a material change. He attacked and conquered Goa and its neighbourhood (1510) and converted it into an impregnable base. Their possessions in India were vaingloriously called the "State of India". What they did was the empire of Indian commerce, *i.e.*, trade in cotton goods, pepper, coral and pearls. The King of Portugal proclaimed himself "the Lord of navigation" and his representatives in India denied to others the right of navigation on the high seas. The Portuguese thus established the sea empire.<sup>5</sup>

In 1517 the Portuguese got permission to set up trading factories in Chhattagram (Chittagong) and Saptagram (Satgaon) and in 1579-80 Akbar allowed them to establish a factory at Hooghly, then an insignificant village on the bank of the Ganges. Elsewhere in Bengal they had their business in Hijli, Sripur and many other places in the districts of Dacca, Jessore, Barisal and Noakhali. By the end of the 16th century, Chhattagram and Dianga and at the beginning of the 17th century, Sandweep and Dakshin Sahabajpur, came into their possession. However, their authority did not last long in Bengal, because the Christian missionaries and pirates associated with their name became objects of terror to the Bengalees as well as to the Moghul emperor. When Shah Jahan rebelled against his father and came to Bengal the Portuguese helped him with their superior firearms and the navy. Subsequently they betrayed and deserted him. In course of their retreat they captured two slave-girls of Shah Jahan's wife, Mamtazmahal and treated them cruelly. When Shah Jahan became the Emperor, he appointed Qasim Khan the Subadar of Bengal, directed the latter to take possession of Hooghly, to capture all white men and women there and either to convert them to Islam or on refusal to send them as slaves to Delhi. This the Subadar did in 1632 when he sent 400 persons

captured to Delhi. With this the Portuguese power and influence came to an end.<sup>6</sup>

In this connection certain facts deserve mention. By 1530 the Portuguese began to frequent Bengal and their ships anchored in Garden Reach at Betor, the western Bank of the Hooghly. At the time the two great centres of trade were Chittagong in the east and Satgaon in west—the former was called the Great Haven or Porto Grande, while the latter the Little Haven or Porto Piqueno. The river was navigable by sea-going ships upto the Adi-Ganga known as Tolly's Nullah, which was then the outlet to the sea. However, beyond this it was too shallow for any but country boats. In Garden Reach lay the anchoring place for the Portuguese and at Betore a mart of thatched huts was erected year by year on the arrival of the ships from Goa and destroyed a few months later when the last boat had come down from Satgaon and her cargo shipped abroad the galliasses. As time went on the river opposite Satgaon began silting up. By 1550 the merchants—princes of Porto Piqueno were one after another forced to seek another market for their trade. The great majority settled at Hooghly, but 4 families of Bysacks and one of Setts founded the village of Govindpore on the east bank of the river just above its junction with the Adiganga. And on the north of Calcutta they opened a mart for the sale of cloth at a place called Suttanuttee Hat, the Cotton Bale Market. The Portuguese went higher up the river and formed a settlement at Hooghly in response to Akbar's invitation. By 1575 this settlement came into existence and the thanas forts were built.<sup>7</sup>

(b) *The Dutch*

The sense of security which the mastery of the seas gave to the Portuguese was their undoing. India's trade was in their hands and there was none to question it especially as Philip II of Spain, the only great power in the Atlantic, had also become the King of Portugal. It was a naval truism at the time that



whoever controlled the Atlantic controlled the Indian Ocean also. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, European nations, especially the Dutch and the English awoke to the fact that the Portuguese power in the Indian Ocean could be challenged. The Dutch sent their first fleet of 4 ships to the East in 1595. Being commercial realists they went straight to the source of spice trade in the East Indies, established themselves at Batavia and proceeded to oust the Portuguese. They set up a chain of posts through Ceylon and Capetown to connect themselves with their home base and proceeded to develop a great Asian network of trade. India came within their purview as a link in their great commercial chain. It was a source of textiles for sale in the West Indies in exchange for spices, whereas the extreme south and Ceylon were suppliers of pepper, cardamon and cinnamon. Malacca was captured in 1641; Colombo fell in 1654; and the smaller settlements on the Malabar coast came into Dutch hands by 1663. The Portuguese monopoly had thus ended.<sup>5</sup>

It may be noted that by 1625 the Dutch had made their way into Bengal and in 1653 they established themselves at Pipili, Chinsurah and Baranagore. Two other subordinate factories were set up at Cossimbazar and Patna. Farrukh-Siyar reduced the customs duty from 3½ to 2½ per cent on their trading goods. The United East India Company of the Netherlands was formed in 1602. The Dutch had 'factories' or Warehouses, but they took no part in politics or cultural contacts. The capital of the Dutch Company was ten times more than that of the English Company—£ 50,000 to £ 5,40,000—and it had the backing of the State.

### (c) *The English*

The English formed their East India Company on the last day of 1600. They had the same commercial vision as the Dutch and they began by sailing to the same destination. But bleak reception awaited them. The Dutch wanted monopoly, not co-existence. So, as soon as they got the better of the common foe, the Portuguese, they became envious of the English traders. And this conflict resulted in the Massacre of Amboyna in 1623, when the Dutch seized the English factory and executed the occupants.

Thereafter the English had to be content with a minor role in the East Indies. It was this Dutch success that drove the English to concentrate on India as a second-best. It was a second-best since, there were no spices except in the extreme south where no monopoly was possible over other Europeans or the local Indian rulers. Spices were small in bulk, in short supply in Europe and so highly profitable. Thus the first Dutch ship of 'clove' fetched a profit of 2,500 per cent. Compared with this the Indian products like textiles, saltpetre and sugar were more bulky, more expensive to carry and produced under more competitive conditions. The margin of profit was much less. Besides, the English merchants faced Portuguese opposition. But they were helped by three factors—(i) the unpopularity of the Portuguese; (ii) the waning Portuguese resources; and (iii) the English maritime prowess. The English went first to Surat and applied to the Moghul Court for privileges. But nothing could be achieved so long as the Portuguese held the sea. It was because of this that the efforts of Captain Hawkins between 1607-11 proved fruitless. Three turning-points came subsequently in favour of the English. The first came in 1612 when the Company's ships defeated the Portuguese in the swally estuary off Surat. The Moghuls then were willing to talk and there followed the embassy of Sir Thomas Roe, a weightier person than Hawkins. The turning-point was his agreement with the Moghuls in 1618, whereby the Company obtained important privileges in exchange for the protection of the commercial and pilgrim sea trade from the Portuguese. And the third turning-point was the siege of Ormuz in the Persian Gulf jointly with the Persians and its capture in 1622 from the Portuguese. From this the Company steadily developed its activities. Its first headquarters from 1612 was at Surat, which was moved to Bombay in 1674—a wedding gift of Charles II's Portuguese queen Catherine transferred to the Company.<sup>9</sup>

On the eastern coast Captain Hippon in 1611 landed at Pattapoli in the Kistna delta and founded a factory at Masulipatam in the north. The factory flourished, but after 1624 declined owing to the opposition and 'four injuries' of the Dutch. The English were on the look-out for a new station. In 1640 Francis Day, a member of the Masulipatam Council procured

from a Hindu raja a strip of land about 230 miles south of Masulipatam with permission to build a fortified factory which was named Fort St. George. Within a few years the town of Madras grew up—it consisted of the White Town or European settlement and of the Black Town of the Indian merchants and weavers. This displaced Masulipatam in 1642 as the chief settlement on the Coromandel coast. Meanwhile the English had made their first settlements in Orissa and Bengal. In 1633, Ralph Cartright established stations at Hariharpur and Balasore. For many years the English maintained their hold upon these places with difficulty. On the one hand they had to face the assaults of the Portuguese and the Dutch ; on the other hand, they were threatened with extinction by the malarial swamps. However, the English prospects showed improvement owing to the efforts of Gabriel Boughton, a surgeon of the Company's ship *Hopewell*. In 1640, Emperor Shah Jahan's beloved daughter, Jahanara fell seriously ill. Dr. Boughton attended the princess at the emperor's desire at Delhi and restored her to health. For this "he obtained a patent, permitting him to trade, without paying any duties, throughout the emperor's dominions". He came to Bengal in 1645 and lived as Court physician with Prince Shah Suja, the Viceroy of Bengal, where he cured a favourite mistress of the Nawab. As a result, all the privileges were confirmed by the Nawab in gratitude : "The generous surgeon did not forget his former employers, but advanced the Company's interests, by continuing that his privileges should be extended to them. Having done so, he wrote an account of his success to the factory of Surat, and the next year a profitable trade was opened in the rich provinces of Bengal".<sup>10</sup> In 1650 he obtained from his patron a licence for the company to trade in the province and in 1651 an English factory was established at Hooghly, where the Portuguese and the Dutch were already settled. Madras was far away and it was difficult to control the factors in Bengal. So in 1656 the Madras Council decided to withdraw from Bengal. However, the arrival of new supplies and men in 1658, after Cromwell's Charter, made them alter their decision. In the same year all the

settlements in Bengal and on the Coromandal Coast were made subordinate to Fort St. George.<sup>11</sup>

Before disappeared from history in the 17th century—its name was changed in the village of Mukwah Tannah and its foreign market transferred to Suttanuttee, where the Setts and Bysacks had been building up a European connection, especially with the English. The Company set up their factory at Hooghly and like the Portuguese used Garden Reach as an anchorage for the sea-going vessels. A complete list of the Bengal Councils appears in a despatch dated 27 February, 1658. The headquarters of the English merchants lay at Hooghly, where the Chief Agent got a monthly salary of one hundred pounds. At Chinsurah there was the Dutch opposition. But the organised opposition came from the "interlopers" who were to oust the London Company from its pride of place. Outside Hooghly a few factories at Dacca, Balasore, Cossimbazar and Patna made up the sum total of the English possessions in Bengal.<sup>12</sup> But the English were oppressed by the Nawab Shaista Khan (1664-77 and 1679-89). As Job Charnock said in 1678: "The whole kingdom is lying in a very miserable feeble condition, the great ones plundering and robbing the feeble".<sup>13</sup> This was called Matsyanyaya or anarchy. It will be shown later how this was dealt with by the English.

#### (d) *The French*

The first French East India Company that succeeded in establishing permanent trade relations with India was that of 1664. The Company owed its inception and success to the French minister Colbert and Louis XIV himself. A factory was founded at Surat in 1668 by Caron, a Dutchman in the French Service and another at Masulipatam in 1669. Pondicherry was founded in 1674 by Francois Martin and this became the future capital of French India—it lay 85 miles south of Madras. In Bengal a factory was built at Chandernagau (1690-2) on the Hooghly, 16 miles above Calcutta on a site given by the Nawab in 1674. The French Company differed from the English in this that from the first the former proposed to establish colonies. It was closely tied to the

State. So, its fortunes rose and fell with the career of ministers and turns of politics.

(e) *The land versus naval power*

It may be noted that the arrival of the Europeans in India created a problem, for the earlier exercise of authority on the seas was purely coastal. In the 15th century sea power on an oceanic scale became a problem that gripped India. She could not realise the significance of what had happened and was able to put up only a local defence. Generally, the recurring fights between the Moghuls and the naval powers resembled those between the elephant and the whale, the one helpless against the other. The imperial authorities had to watch with impotent rage their pilgrim traffic being interfered with, the ships of their merchants pillaged and confiscated on the high seas. On the other hand, the European powers had to put up with the insolence of local officials, interference with their trade and occasional attacks on their factories. It is a historical truism that a naval power cannot maintain a land empire against a well-organised land power and that in the absence of such a land power, the naval bases become the nuclei of empires. Thus for a hundred years the Portuguese with their naval strength could not break the might of the Zamorin; nor could the Dutch in the following hundred years. When the Moghul empire was still powerful, neither the English, nor the Hollanders, nor the French could do more than carry on the trade. But with the weakening of the central authority, the factories which had concealed their political ambitions, came out in the open and stood forth to shape the course of history.<sup>15</sup>

#### IV. . The English on the war-path

(a) *The Home background*

The first British Empire was planted during 1600—1660 and organised between 1660 and 1714. During the Middle Ages trade with India was by land route. After Vasco da Gama's discovery of India (1498), the Dutch and the English formed the East India Companies in the 17th century and built up trade. However, they had encounters between them. Since the massacre

15. Panikkar, op. cit. 188-89.

at Amboyna (1623) the English East India Company gave up trading with the islands and turned to India's mainland. A number of 'factories' or overseas stations in the charge of 'factors' or agents were started—Surat in 1612, Madras in 1639, Hooghly in 1650, Bombay in 1668 and Fort William (Calcutta) in 1696.

During the 17th century two movements were noticeable—colonising and trading. It was known as the old colonial system and marked by the following features : (i) settlements in islands or coasts ; (ii) consideration of colonies as outposts of the mother country ; (iii) supply of raw materials from the colonies to the mother country ; (iv) production in colonies of articles which the mother-country could not produce ; (v) trade controlled by Navigation Laws ; and (vi) responsibility of the mother-country for the defence of the Colonies.

#### 1. *Colonialism and all that*

Patriotism and economic nationalism goaded the nation-States of Europe to territorial aggrandizement. These European powers carried on their shoulders "the white man's burden", which can be best described in the words of Rudyard Kipling thus—

Take up the White Man's Burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons to exile  
To serve your captives' need."

And the place where the White man carries his burden of civilising its inhabitants is called a colony. Now, these colonies may originate usually in *settlements* by traders or explorers of territories unoccupied by any other independent States or in *conquests* of territories already occupied by other States. The process of converting an area into a colony is called colonialism.

The system is distinguished by certain features. In the first place, there is the "economic exploitation" of the colonies. Under the old colonial system the colonies were not permitted to export certain commodities to any other country except England. Nor were they to produce commodities that might harm the mother-country. They also could not hire the ships of any other country except those of England. The colonies were valued as markets.

In the words of Chatham : "The importance of (a colony) is that it is double market : a market of consumption and a market of supply".

*Secondly*, the chief object of colonialism was promotion of commerce in terms of national interests. It was to increase the bullion stock of the home country, since the bullion was considered to be the only real wealth. Hence, merchants were encouraged to send their goods only to countries that could pay them in gold, not in goods.

*Finally*, colonialism led to "imperialism" when the Great Powers succeeded in acquiring colonies or building empires. This process differs from that of simple conquest in this that the former applies where the conquered are alien in language, culture or race to the conquerors or where non-contiguous overseas territory is acquired.<sup>17</sup>

2. *Mercantilism*—The colonial activities gave rise to a new politico-economic doctrine called 'mercantilism' during the Stuart period in England. It was 'nationalism in commerce' as manifested itself in the reign of Charles II (1660-85). A 'mercantile' theory had grown out of the more crude mediaeval ideas. It taught (i) that the State must be self-sufficient, (ii) that by tariffs and regulations it must maintain a population fit to carry arms and in full work, and (iii) that it must grow its own food, do its own carrying trade, and hold the balance between town and country, plenty and power. And the index of prosperity would be the balance of trade, which should be measured not by prohibition on the export of precious metals, but by the total superiority of exports over imports.<sup>15</sup>

3. *The Navigation System*—One of the aims of Mercantilism was the development of shipping so as to enable the naval might of the country to cope with its defence. And this was pursued by the enactment of a series of Navigation Acts. The earliest Navigation Act was passed in 1381 in the reign of Richard II. It required all imports and exports to be carried in English ships. But the Act could not be enforced because of inadequate supply of English ships. Many other subsequent Acts were passed, but

they were unenforceable since the regulations were impracticable. The first important Navigation Act was passed in 1651 in the 17th century. The Act ordered that goods from Asia, Africa or America imported into England or Ireland or the plantations should be carried in English or plantation ships, that is, ships of which the owner, the master, and the most part of the mariners were men of England or the colonies. *Secondly*, goods from European countries might be imported into England, Ireland or the colonies in English or colonial ships or in those of the country exporting the goods. *Thirdly*, cargoes brought in English ships were to come direct from the country of origin or the usual port of shipping and were not to be transhipped at an intermediate port. *Finally*, foreign vessels were excluded from the English coasting trade.

To some extent the 1651 Act was found to be unenforceable. The Navigation Act of 1660 was passed to plug the loopholes. Thus a clever definition of an English ship was formulated—the owner, master, and three-fourths of the crew were to be English, and in certain cases the ships should be English-built. *Secondly*, colonial exports or imports were to be carried in English or plantation ships and alien merchants and their agents forbidden to reside in English plantations. *Thirdly*, certain enumerated products were to be exported from colonies to England, Ireland or another plantation, but non-enumerated commodities might be sent, in English or colonial ships, to other countries. *Finally*, higher duties were to be paid on goods brought to England or Ireland in foreign ships than on those imported in English vessels. The Act of 1660 laid down the principles that regulated the shipping of England for nearly two centuries with modifications made from time to time. It may be noted, however, that commerce expanded and shipping increased, in spite of Navigation Acts.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. *The Company trading*

During the later Middle ages English overseas trade was carried on mainly by aliens. By the 16th century it had, to a considerable extent, passed into the hands of English merchants. England took advantage of the exploration begun by the Mariners of



other nations. English ships ventured afar and before the end of the Tudor period the globe had been circumnavigated by Englishmen. The Reformation took place in the course of the 16th century and England renounced her allegiance to the papacy. Spain remained faithful to Rome : She determined as a colonising power to force England to obedience to Rome. English sailors also resolved to attack Spanish power in all parts of the world. In Indian oceans and elsewhere it was the English and Protestant in opposition to Catholic Spain. Out of their intermingling of adventure, exploration, piracy and religion opportunities for commercial intercourse arose and English merchants seized them. Individual traders were, however, discouraged. And from the 16th to the 18th century commerce was carried on by great companies holding Charters of the Crown. By the terms of its Charter a company enjoyed a monopoly of trade between England and some specified part of the world. The following advantages were claimed for the company. *First*, a company was more careful of reputation than individuals. On the other hand, interlopers arrived at fortune by trickery and fraud. Orderly trade was the aim of the company. *Second*, it could obtain special privileges from alien rulers. *Third*, it was able to protect its ships from pirates. *Fourth*, government could regulate trade and collect duties from companies more easily than from interlopers.

The trading companies were of two distinct types—regulated and joint-stock. A regulated company was an association of merchants having a Charter which authorised its members to engage in a specified trade. The company drew up rules and negotiated with its government and with foreign rulers. It might establish depots in the countries with which trade was carried on and secured privileges. But the company as a whole did not trade. Each venture was supported by members, singly or in partnership. But joint-stock companies differed. In them capital is contributed by the members. The company carried on its affairs through its paid officials, while the members or shareholders received their proportion of the profits in the form of dividends on their shares. Unlike the members of a regulated company, all the shareholders were affected by the success or failure of every transaction in which the company was engaged. It is thus quite natural that the joint-stock trading companies of the Tudor and Stuart periods were far more open to the charge

of being monopolistic in character than were the regulated companies.

The East India Company belonged to the second type, *i.e.*, the joint-stock variety. It received its first Charter on 31st December, 1600. At first the existing rights of the Levant and Muscovy Companies were expressly safeguarded, but the limits of the monopoly of the new organisation were fixed as between the Cape of Good Hope and the Strait of Magellan. For the first few years the affairs of the company were conducted on the basis of raising a separate joint stock for each voyage with the return of capital to the subscribers after completion of the venture. It took long time to settle the accounts. In 1612 a joint-stock was established for a number of voyages and in 1657 a permanent joint stock, non-returnable, was raised. During the first century of its existence the company encountered and overcame many difficulties such as the rivalry of the Dutch Company, the activity of interpolers, hostile criticism at home, and the establishment of a rival company in 1698, which was amalgamated with the original organisation 10 years later.<sup>20</sup> And this amalgamated company came into existence under the title, "United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies" (1708). The 20 years 1660-1680 may be regarded as the golden age of the company while still a non-political and non-territorial trading body. When Queen Anne died, the East India Company hardly ruled a foot of Indian soil. However, its factories were already the germs of the future presidencies—Surat (1612) and Bombay (1668), Madras (1639) and Calcutta (1690). The subsequent events like the Battle of Plassey (1757) transformed the company's dominion in India to the dominion of India. The Court of Directors decided to "stand forth as the *Dewan*" and Warren Hastings was sent to Bengal as Governor "with full powers to make a complete reformation". He became the Governor in April 1772 and his designation was upgraded to Governor-General in October 1774 under the Regulating Act of 1773 passed by British Parliament. From a clerk or writer he had risen to be the Resident at the *Durbar* and member of the Calcutta Council. Thus the East India company became a governing, trading corporation.

20. *Ibid*, 74-81.

(b) *The company at war with the Moghul*

(i) *The Indian scene*—The English in Bengal had been oppressed by the Nawab Shaista Khan during 1664-77 and 1679-89. The two Charters—one of October 5, 1676 and the second of August 9, 1683—granted by Charles II authorised the Company “to create an Empire in India”. The first Charter empowered the Company to coin money at Bombay. This marked the complete sovereignty of the Crown over Bombay. The second Charter gave the company full power to declare and make peace and war with any heathen nation and to raise, arm, train and muster military forces and also to execute martial law for the defence of their forts, places and plantations against foreign invasion or domestic insurrection or rebellion. This contained a provision that reserved to the Crown the power of making peace and war “when we shall be pleased to interpose our royal authority therein”. This clarifies the essential rule that the acquisition of sovereignty by subjects of the Crown is on behalf of the Crown and not in their own right. These privileges were renewed by James II in the Charter of April 12, 1686.<sup>21</sup> The terms, *inter alia*, are set forth thus : “The Company (may) demand and procure satisfaction in a peaceable way, if it be attainable, and if not, the said company intend to endeavour the recovery of their losses and damages, and to procure their satisfaction by force of arms ; and in time of war or actual hostility with any nation, they may use and exercise the Law Martial in their ships, plantations, forts and places for defence against any foreign enemy or domestic insurrection, rebellion or disorder”.<sup>22</sup>

That a change had come over the Indian scene is graphically described by Gerald Aungier, President at Surat and Governor of Bombay (1669-77) who wrote to the Court of Directors : “The State of India is much altered . . . . the times now require you to manage your general commerce with your sword in your hands”.<sup>23</sup> This militant attitude broke with the old traditions laid down by the first great Anglo-Indian Statesman, Sir Thomas Roe,

21. Keith, A. B.—A Constitutional History of India 1600-1935 (Reprint, 1961), 10-11.

22. Records of Fort St. George : Dispatches from England 1686-1692, Madras, 1929 (para 14), 7-8.

23. India Office Records, C.C. 4258.

James I's Ambassador and the Company's Agent at the Court of the Moghul Emperor, Jahangir (1605-27) for three years (1616-19) thus: "A war and traffic are incompatible. Let this be received as a rule that if you will profit, seek it at sea, and in quiet trade; for without controversy it is an error to affect garri-sons and land-wars in India".<sup>24</sup> The advice of Gerald Aungier fell on willing ears, because there were other factors affecting the company at the time, namely, the rebellion of Keigwin, the royalist commander of the garrison at Bombay (1683-4) and a rising at St. Helena, taken from the Dutch in 1673. To meet the new situation the company had to employ new methods. The Court of Committees resolved to declare war on Aurangzeb (1658-1707). At this time one of their dispatches contained the famous sentence often quoted as a prophecy of British destiny in the East. It urged their President and Council to "establish such a polity of civil and military power and create and secure such a large revenue as may be the foundation of a large well-grounded sure English Dominion in India for all time to come".

This militant policy is generally associated with Sir Josia and Sir John Child. The former wielded an almost autocratic influence in the Counsels of the Company at home and he had been four times Governor between 1681 and 1687. His position remained powerful in the Court of Committees even at a later date (1692-4). Sir John Child was the President of Surat and Governor of Bombay, that is, the real Chief of the Company in India from 1682-90. The Childs were not brothers, as was supposed by Bruce, Henry Yule and others. In one of his letters to Sir Josia, Sir John concluded as the former's "Kinsman". Modern research has thus dispelled the belief that they were related. *Secondly*, it is said that "Sir Josia was the father of imperialism and British Empire in India".<sup>25</sup> But this seems untenable in view of the fact that Gerald Aungier had earlier suggested the management of "general commerce with sword in hands". Hence, he may be called the father-figure of the militant policy in India. *Thirdly*, no single person could be associated as the father, since many others in-

cluding the two Kings of England—Charles II and James II—had been associated with this. Rather it was a collegiate leadership that was responsible for the introduction of this change. Imperialism was in the air—its brooding omnipresence could be felt in the atmosphere.

It was in Madras that the Company first developed what is called 'imperialism', since it was "by far the most independent of the settlements, the nearest to exercise of sovereign powers".<sup>27</sup> But the policy met with disappointment. Captain Nicholson was sent from England with 10 armed vessels and a force of 600 men, to be reinforced by 400 taken on board at Madras with instructions to capture Chittagang, to go to war with the King of Siam and to capture Salsette from the Portuguese. But none of the aims could be realised. When the expedition arrived at Hooghly in October, 1686 hostilities broke out. After the bombardment of the town the English returned 27 miles down the river to Sutanati. The Emperor gave orders for a general attack on the English settlements. The factories at Patna, Cossimbazar, Masulipatam, and Visagapatam were seized and Bimbanay besieged. At this Captain Heath was sent out from England with reinforcements. In 1688 he took on board all the English in Bengal with the Company's goods, bombarded and burnt Balasore and sailed to conquer Chittagang. He found it strongly defended and after a month of fruitless negotiations made his way to Madras where he arrived in March, 1689. And the result may be best summed up in the words of Roberts thus: "And so the consequence of the Company's spirited war policy was the evacuation of Bengal and the loss of the result of half a century's painful toil and effort".<sup>28</sup>

(ii) *Causes of discontent*—A plea for war in Bengal was advocated by William Hedges, Job Charnock and John Child. Some of the grounds of discontent were: (1) Defective firmans; (2) Illegal exactions; (3) Quarrel over customs; (4) Sale of dastaks; (5) Incitement to interlopers; (6) Cry for a fortified settlement; and (7) Cossimbazar dispute.<sup>29</sup> William Hedges arrived at Hooghly on July 21, 1682 as Agent. He was opposed to

"continual patching" with the Moghuls. To this end he discussed his plan of a breach with the Moghul with the President of Fort St. George on his return from Cossimbazar in October, 1684.<sup>30</sup> Job Charnock succeeded John Beard as Agent in April, 1686. Earlier he pointed out to the Company that a "resettlement after a breach" with the Moghul was necessary to stop the increasing exactions by the officers of Nawab Shaista Khan, Viceroy of Bengal. And the Court endorsed on August 12, 1685 in a letter to the Agent and Council at Hooghly Charnock's proposal.<sup>31</sup> The grounds are discussed below :

### (1) *Defective firmans*

By a *firman* of 1680 Aurangzeb required the English at Surat to pay customs duty @ 3½ per cent instead of 2 per cent as earlier paid since 1667, the extra 1½ per cent being the *Ziziya* or poll tax, since the merchants were non-Muslims. And the *firman* read : "And at all other places, upon this account, let no one hinder or molest them for custom".<sup>32</sup> In 1682 Rai Balchand, Shaista Khan's Superintendent of Customs at Hooghly interpreted the *firman* to mean that it did not concern Bengal.<sup>33</sup> But Sir Jadunath Sarkar has rightly observed that the English interpretation that they were not to pay duties in other places was wrong : "Payment of duty on the goods landed at Surat could by no means exempt from duty a different cargo that had come from Home or China not through Surat but directly to Bengal and which, therefore, could not have paid any duty at Surat".<sup>34</sup>

### (2) *Illegal exactions*

The Moghul officials used to exact *rahdari*, *peshkash*, writer's fee and *farmaish*. Besides, the Bengal Subadars like Shaista Khan and Prince Azimush-Shan opened packages of goods in transit and took away articles of their choice at low prices fixed by them. This was known as "opening and forcing goods". Sometimes they sold these goods in the open market and enriched themselves. This practice was called *Sauda-i-Khas*, 'prince's own business'

30. Hedges's Diary, Vol. I. 133. 161.

31. Despatches from England 1681-86. 181.

32. Fawcett, C. (ed.)—The English factories in India 1678-84, Vol. IV ; The eastern coast and Bay of Bengal (1935), 230-31.

33. Sarkar, J. N.—History of Aurangzeb, Vol. V (1974), 245-6.

Aurangzeb passed stern strictures on this. He called this *Sauda-i-Kham* or very crude plan.<sup>34</sup>

(3) *Quarrel over customs*

At Surat the Company had been paying 3 per cent customs and Aurangzeb reduced it to 2 per cent as is evident from his *firman* dated June 26, 1667. In 1679 poll tax was added to it, making it 3½ per cent. According to Shah Shuja's *nishans* of 1654 and 1656 the English were custom-free in Bengal since 1651 in exchange for Rs. 3,000. Soon the official began to question the imperial *firman*.<sup>35</sup> On a reference to the emperor an order came to the Company for payment of 3½ per cent custom on all goods imported or exported. In spite of Haji Safi Khan's order of suspension of payment for 7 months, the Company had to deposit the dues for 1682 and 1683 @ 3½ per cent.<sup>36</sup>

(4) *Sale of dastaks*

The English and the Dutch were accused of selling *dastaks* or free passes to Indian merchants and the Company's servants. The country became filled with numerous *gomastas* or agents. The Company also disapproved of the practice.<sup>37</sup> The English factors tried to evade payment of the lawful duty. And this led to frequent collisions with the Moghul officials.<sup>38</sup>

(5) *Incitement to interlopers*

For the first time interlopers appeared in the Bay of Bengal in 1680 with the ship *William and John* coming to Balasore and thereafter to Hooghly in December. Thomas Pitt acted as the chief of the interlopers. They were aided and abetted by the Company's servants and assisted by the Moghul officials at Hooghly and the Viceroy at Dacca. They could secure *parwanas* with payment of sumptuous bribes and presents.<sup>39</sup> To prevent interloping the Company had to pay the King at home—Charles II/James II—£ 10,750 during 1683-85.<sup>40</sup>

34. Sarkar, J. N.—History of Aurangzeb Vol. V. 242.

35. Fort St. George letters 1684-85, Vol. III (1917), 77-9.

36. Hedges's Diary, Vol. I. 139.

37. Fawcett, op. cit., 258.

38. Sarkar, op. cit., 246.

39. Fawcett, op. cit., 341.

40. Foster, W.—John Company (1926), 132-34.

(6) *Cry for a fortified settlement*

William Hedges first suggested a fortified settlement on 31 October, 1683.<sup>41</sup> The Court of Committees considered this. But the charter prior to 12 April, 1686 did not empower the Company to wage a war with foreign powers. Hence the Company declared on 15 March, 1681: "All war is so contrary to our Constitution as well as our interest that we cannot too often inculcate to you our aversion thereunto".<sup>42</sup> The Court of Committees realised the imperative need for a fortified settlement in Bengal, which had become the Company's mainstay for saltpetre, silk and coastal trade. The Company, however, could neither construct walled factories nor fortify its head factory at Hooghly because of the Nawab Shaista Khan's opposition. And the English factory was situated in the middle of the town which was the cause of frequent disputes with the inhabitants.<sup>43</sup> The Court of Committees wrote on 2 July, 1684 to the Agent and Council at Hooghly thus: "Our business is only trade and security, not conquest; we dare not trade boldly, nor leave great stocks, where we have not the security of a fort".<sup>44</sup> The Court wrote again for securing a fortified settlement in Bengal "for the honour of our King and for the good of our common country and posterity".<sup>45</sup> The Moghul Government was opposed to such fortification, while the Company was keen on it and even prepared to risk a war with the Moghul on this score.

(7) *Cossimbazar dispute*

Cossimbazar was important for the Company because of its silk trade. The merchants, weavers and picars were aggrieved at Charnock's "taking 2 per cent of them to price their goods favourably; and paying of them with light money".<sup>46</sup> The Moorshidahad Kazi ordered the Company to pay them Rs. 43,600 and this was endorsed by the Nawab. The factory was seized and Charnock could not come out of it, while the goods could

41. Hedges's Diary, Vol. I, 133-4.

42. Khan, S. A.—East India Trade in the 17th century (Reprint, 1980) 202.

43. Stewart, C.—History of Bengal, 332.

44. Khan, op. cit., 201.

45. Dispatches from England (1685-86), 35.

46. Hedges's Diary, Vol. I, 85.



neither come in nor be despatched.<sup>47</sup> Negotiations went on between the Nawab and the Company. Ultimately the Nawab "forced out" Rs. 44, 000 from the Dacca factory to satisfy the picars in 1686 and this ended the dispute with weavers, picars and silk merchants at Cossimbazar.<sup>48</sup>

(iii) *The Company's dilemma*—Since the dispute between Charnock and the silk merchants at Cossimbazar took a turn for the worse in 1684, they completed the closure of the outlying factories in Bengal *i.e.*, Patna, Cossimbazar, Malda and Dacca. However, John Beard, the Agent in Bengal and his Council signed an appeal on 5 January, 1685. On June 15, 1685 the factors at Hooghly wrote to the President at Fort St. George.<sup>49</sup> The factors in Bengal were thus in a dilemma like Hamlet's, to withdraw or not to withdraw the inland factories at Dacca, Malda, Cossimbazar and Patna. They remained undecided as to whether native merchants would be paid their dues and the company would collect theirs from the merchants, because this needed the help of the local governor. Moreover, they could not proceed to Hooghly to trade therefrom without settling the accounts.

(c) *The Moghul-English clashes.*

There are many forms of imperial control. The one is known as the "spheres of influence". The phrase is usually applied to areas in which imperial powers are granted economic privileges and the native States retain sovereignty and political authority. The European sea-powers attempted this type of control.<sup>50</sup> The English in the exercise of their powers came into clashes with the Moghul authorities as noted below.

(i) *On the western front*—Sir Josiah Child was at the helm of the East India Company from 1680 to 1686. John Child acted as Governor of Bombay from 1682 to 1690. John was made a baronet in 1685.<sup>51</sup> Bombay has a history. By a secret marriage treaty with Portugal (1661) England got it as a dowry to the Infanta Catherine on her marriage with Charles II. Owing to some difficulties placed in the way by local officials, the island could not

47. Fawcett, *op. cit.*, 352-3, 355-6.

48. Hedges's Diary, Vol. II, 59 (Demands, item No. 5).

49. Letters to Fort St. George, 1684-5, Vol. III, 38, 138-43.

50. Schuman, F. L.—International politics (1948), 530-31.

51. Strachey, Ray and Oliver—Keigwin's rebellion, 1683-4(1916), 21, 163-4.

be made over to the King's representatives until February 1665. It was found that the outlay on the maintenance and development of the new possession would make a heavy demand on the royal purse. So on 27 March, 1668 Charles II transferred it to the Company in consideration of a temporary loan of £ 50,000 at 3% at a quit rent of £ 10 per annum. And the actual handing over took place on 23 September, 1668.<sup>52</sup> The expense of fortifying Bombay was more than the revenue and the Company became burdened with debt. This made the Company reduce the number of their military force and the troop of horses was disbanded with Keigwin, its Commandant dismissed.<sup>53</sup> Keigwin protested and ultimately had a revolt in 1683-4. He governed the Bombay Settlement until November 1682. Having obtained a promise of free pardon for himself and his supporters he surrendered the island to Sir Thomas Grantham on 12 November, 1684. Thereafter Sir John Wyburn was despatched as Deputy Governor to Bombay. But Sir John Child, the Governor found his new Deputy too independent and therefore tried means to deprive him of his appointment. But Wyburn had not lived to experience such modification.

#### 1. *Sir John Child's activities*

With the appointment of Sir John Child as Governor of Bombay, the seat of the English Government was ordered to be transferred from Surat to Bombay. All the Company's Stores were to be kept in the Castle and the ships to lay in the harbour; only a subordinate Agent and Council were to remain at Surat. Reduced to a Factory.<sup>54</sup> The Secret Committee informed Sir John of the "probable war in Bengal" and of the position of the fleet of ships for the northern part.<sup>55</sup> Sir John was given the designation of "General". This was explained in a letter of August, 1687—this was intended to confer on its holder "the same preeminence and authority which the Dutch confer upon their General at Batavia".<sup>56</sup> Though the Island of Bombay was ceded by the Portuguese, the adjacent Islands like Salsette, Karaiya etc. were not transferred to Charles

52. Cambridge History of India, Vol. V, 87.

53. Anderson, P.—The English in Western India, 1854.

54. Bruce, J.—Annals of the Hon'ble East India Company, Vol. II, 553, 568, 585, 587.

55. Dispatches from England 1681-86, (1916), 207-9.

56. Cambridge History of India, Vol. V (Indian Reprint), 102.

II. The General was ordered not to pay customs at Thana and Karanja and if necessary to "resist force with force".<sup>57</sup> To enable the General to carry out the orders of the Court a Royal Proclamation was issued on 11 July, 1686 at the instance of the Company. This required all the Company's servants and all English subjects who had entered into the service of the country powers to return to the Company's Settlements at Bombay or Madras within 6 months.<sup>58</sup> Sir John received the instructions of the Secret Committee on 26 September, 1686 at Surat. Since the Mocha and Basra fleet of the Moghul was then "imported and unladen", he could not take any ship, but planned seizure of the vessels at the commencement of hostilities in Bengal. He left Surat on 25 April, 1687 and arrived at Bombay on 2 May, 1687. Bombay was then turned a Regency to uphold the President's prestige.

The transfer of the seat of English administration from Surat to Bombay enraged the Moghul Governor of Surat, Mukhtear Khan. When boats were sent to Surat to fetch Harris and Annesley who had been kept there to look after the Company's business, Mukhtear Khan ordered on 26 December, 1688 the capture of the Surat factory, confined the two care-takers<sup>59</sup> and "offered a large reward to any one who would take Child, dead or alive". Since the General failed by negotiation to secure the release of the factors, he captured several native ships, besides 40 vessels laden with provisions for the Moghul army. He showed arrogance towards the Admiral, the Siddee. On 14 February, 1689 the Siddee landed at Sewri with 20 or 25 thousand men. Next morning the Siddee marched to Maragon, abandoned by the English, leaving in haste 8 or 10 chests of treasure besides arms and ammunitions. Captain Penn was sent by the General to meet the Siddee, but was defeated. The Moghul Admiral occupied the Island from February 15, 1689 to June 22, 1690. And the General had to submit to a shameless peace. As a result, he sent two envoys—George Weldon and Abraham Navarro—to the Moghul Court in Delhi, where they were received with their hands tied by a sash before them. On 27 February, 1690 the Emperor imposed a humiliating peace treaty. The company was asked to pay a fine

57. Letters to Fort St. George for 1686-7, Vol. IV. No. 142 at 139-40.

58. Bruce, *op. cit.*, 568-9.

59. Letters to Fort St. George for 1688 (Public Sundries No. 3), 1915 at 5.

of £ 1,50,000 and expel Child. By a subsequent *firman*, the English traders were allowed to return to Bengal and to carry on their custom-free trade on payment of an annual tribute of Rs. 3,090/-<sup>60</sup>

## 2. *Effect of war*

Though the Company did not fare well in the war with the Moghul, their gains had been outstanding. The war cost them £ 4,16,000 and a loss of £ 8,00,000 in traffic for 4 years. Against this, the Company had taken prize ships to the value of £ 1,500,000 and out of it paid £ 16,638 as the King's share. Hence the net monetary gain amounted to £ 2,67,362.<sup>61</sup> Besides, it was a diplomatic history for the English. In the words of the court: "The war sufficiently vindicated our nation from the reproach of cowardice and secured all our ancient privileges in India at the Company's excessive charge".

(ii) *On the Eastern Front*—The English had entered Bengal as a trading company and for the freedom and protection of their commercial operations they relied on the good will of the country powers. The *firmans* and *parwanas* expressive of this good will were regarded by them as definite concessions of legal rights. It was not in their nature to forego meekly any right they believed had been formerly conceded to them. Moreover, they got in 1661 a Charter, that empowered the Company's government "to erect fortifications, to raise troops, and make war with non Christians". Because of the great increase in its Bengal investments and of the receipt of Aurangzeb's *firman*, the Company in 1682 made Bengal independent of Madras and sent Hedges, one of the Directors, to be the Chief Agent or Governor in the Bay of Bengal. However in 1682 the trade at Hooghly came to "a general stop". This situation was due to the caprice of the Viceroy and the machinations of his underlings. In October Hedges resolved to proceed to Dacca and lay a complaint before Shaista Khan. Parameswar Das, the local revenue authority secretly despatched armed parties to seize the little fleet higher up the river. During the journey Hedges met further molestation, but ultimately reached Dacca, where he spent

60. Gupta, B.—Background to the foundation of British power in India (1962), 5.

61. Wright, A.—Annesley of Surat and his times (1918), 125.

62. Public Despatches from England, 1686-92, at 161.

6 weeks in negotiations and came back with the expectation that he would get a *firman* redressing the grievances. But the expectations proved illusions in the end. However, being elated with his supposed successes he began to reform the Company's service. This led to his dismissal on 17 July, 1684.<sup>63</sup>

### 1. *The Chittagong expectation*

The Company began to lose confidence in the *firman*s and *parwanas*. Earlier Hedges suggested that a quarrel with the Moghul authorities being inevitable, the Company would risk one year's trade in the Bay and build a fort on the Isle of Saugor. In the Despatches of 21 December, 1683 they concluded that the seizure of a pleasant island in the Ganges would be too expensive and bring the Dutch to the aid of the Moghul. To meet a war in Bengal, a seizure of Chittagong would be helpful. And this was merely an academic suggestion. A few years later the Court had developed a military spirit and in 1686 obtained permission from James II to go to war with the Great Moghul and to establish themselves by force in his dominions. They sent out a large armament consisting of 10 ships of 12 to 70 guns under Captain Nicholson. Six Companies of Infantry were also sent. The Directors ordered the troops to take possession by force if necessary, of the town, fort and territory of Chittagong and to instal Lt Colonel Job Charnock as Governor there.<sup>64</sup>

It may be noted that Shaista Khan, the Moghul Viceroy in Bengal conquered Chittagong in 1666 from the Burmese King of Arrakan with the help of the Feringis. The company was under the impression that they could wrest Chittagong from the Moghul *foujdar* with the help of the Arrakanese King. But the Court correctly understood that Chittagong was "strong by nature".<sup>65</sup> Charnock also knew the real position and so was opposed to sending an expedition for its capture. The Directors ordered that their officers should take and fortify Chittagong with 200 pieces of cannon and make it a seat of commerce. Further, they were

63. Hedges's Diary—The Diary of William Hedges Esq. (afterwards Sir William Hedges), (ed) R. Barlow and Col Henry Yule, 1887. Vol. I, 32, 62.

64. Wilson, C. R.—The early annals of the English in Bengal, Vol. I (1895), 90.

65. Despatches from England 1681-86 at 186-93.

directed to march up to Dacca, the then capital of Bengal and capture it. The Secret Committee asked the Company's President at Fort St. George to send Fowler, the Engineer of the Fort along with Captain Nicholson to assist him in the fortification of Chittagong. But Chittagong did not pass into the hands of the Company until 1760.

## 2. *The Hooghly affray*

A. *Prelude*—A part only of the allotted fleet arrived, while the President had been waiting for the remainder, an affray was caused by three soldiers on 28 October, 1686 at Hooghly and this led to a general engagement. In this connection three antecedent circumstances causing the affray may be noted. The first was the dispute at Cossimbazar with the silk merchants, weavers and picars, which was engineered by Mathuradas Shah, a Gujarati Bania. Job Charnock reported in his letter dated 31 October, 1685 from Cossimbazar to the President that Mathuradas had bribed the Governor so as to detain him there.<sup>66</sup> Mathuradas was the chief broker of the East India Company at Hooghly from 1680 till his death in 1706. The second related to Haggerston's advice to Abdul Ghani, the Governor of Hooghly to the effect that the English should sign 6 Articles of undertaking, namely, (i) to keep all ships below Sankrail or Great thana and bring up all goods by boats from there ; (ii) to appoint a 'Serra' Vakil in his court with powers of attorney to bind the English in all his transactions ; (iii) to employ only merchants as *gomastas* who would bring in all goods after payment of customs with Governor's certificates ; (iv) to pay compensation to Indian shipping for harm caused by the English ; (v) to trade only in Company's ships ; and (vi) to produce *dastaks* or passes issued by the native Governors for goods brought from inland factories. The Agent and Council did not sign the Articles despite the threat of confinement.<sup>67</sup> The Governor seized the factory and stopped the Company's trade, besides denying provisions. The factors procured *parwanas* from the Nawab and the King's Dewan on 19 August, 1683 to clear the Company's business. But Abdul Ghani refused to see them. At last the factors patched up their differences with Abdul Ghani in November, 1685 and resumed their trading

66. Letters to Fort St. George for 1684-85. Vol. III (1917), 237-39.

67. Nair, *op. cit.*, 234.

operations.<sup>68</sup> Thomas Haggerston mentioned above had been in the private employment of Sir John Child and absconded with Rs. 50,000 worth of gold and pearls entrusted to him for their safe conveyance to Surat.<sup>69</sup> And the Moghul officials had been harbouring him so as to prevent the English from bringing him to justice. The third category consisted of a couple of incidents—(1) the disrespect shown to the Moghul flag at Balasore in a riot in December, 1684, and (2) the accidental murder of a man and a boy at Hooghly during the reception given to President Gyfford on August 29, 1684. The first was hushed up by Shaista Khan on receipt of the Agent of Hooghly's petition with a present.<sup>70</sup> On 10 April, 1685 one of the peons of the Kotwal's (chief of City Police) watch and ward was murdered and some others wounded and the dead body carried to the *foujdar*. After inquest the *foujdar* pinned the responsibility on the English company. However, the factors accommodated the Balasore issue upon the best term with great charge to the company.<sup>71</sup>

#### B. *Actual engagement*

Job Charnock joined at Hooghly in April 1686 as the Agent of the Company after escaping from Cossimbazar where he had been detained. On learning the despatch of an expeditionary force by the Court of Directors, he became determined to take revenge on the Moghul. To this end he started preparations. The fleet for the Chittagong expedition arrived. One *Beaufort* was left behind at Balasore because she had been leaky. And Job Charnock sent his chief pilot to bring her to Hijili for careening. The troops from the ships were sent up the river in small vessels and quartered, some at Hooghly, some at Chandernagar.<sup>72</sup> Abdul Ghani denied the English trade and victuals in the bazar. And the Nawab had ordered concentration of three thousand foot and three hundred horse at Hooghly to guard the town.<sup>73</sup>

The English soldiers were out on October 28, 1686, in the bazar

68. Letters to Fort St. George for 1684-85 (letter dt. Nov. 20, 1685 to Fort), 232-37.

69. Hedges's Diary, Vol. I, 97.

70. Letters op. cit., 33-6.

71. Ibid, 129-34, 138-43.

72. Wilson—Early Annals I. 95-6.

73. Hedges's Diary, Vol. I, 54-5.

in the morning when they were denied victuals and in addition beaten, cut and carried as prisoners bound, to the *fouzdar*. On receipt of the news, Charnock asked Captain Leslie, the commander to bring in the bodies, dead or alive. The *fouzdar* also met the threat with a body of horse and foot soldiers. In the resulting affray Capt. Leslie put the Governor's troops to fight. The Governor's troops set fire to the thatched houses of the town, near the English factory to prevent the exit of the English. The fire consumed the Company's old factory containing stock of saltpetre and private person's goods. Charnock called up the troops stationed at Chandernagar and asked Captain Richardson to attack the battery. Capt. Robert Arbuthnot assaulted the battery and the Governor fled. The English troops reduced Hooghly to shambles by burning 500 houses and committing indiscriminate plunder. A truce was agreed to on 30 October at 2 o'clock—the Governor was to take off all restraints on the Company's trade and to supply the English with victuals, servants and labourers. Charnock seized a big ship of Shaista Khan and ordered Capt. Nicholson to take 3 or 4 more Moghul ships at Balasore and stop all native shipping there. During the truce period Charnock was preparing for withdrawal.<sup>73</sup> In retaliation the Patna factory was seized and the chief at Dacca detained.

### C. *Negotiations and the result*

The Nawab sent three Commissioners—Bohur Mull, Mallick Barcoordar and Meir Facca—to Hooghly to redress the English Company's grievances. After the skirmish Charnock and other Englishmen had been staying in the *Beaufort* and other great ships with the Company's goods. Charnock left Hooghly on 20 December, 1686 for Hijili and on the way reached 'Chutanuttee' where he halted to celebrate the Christmas and sent down the *Beaufort* for careening at Hijili.<sup>74</sup> Charnock in his negotiations with the Commissioners claimed Rs. 64,75,000 for damages suffered by the Company. The break-down of the amount was as follows : (1) the amount extorted by Balchand from Vincent at Cossimbazar—Rs. 14,000 ; (2) the amount plundered by Saif Khan from the Patna factory—Rs. 80,000/- ; (3) the loss suffered owing to detention of Job Charnock at Cossimbazar with silk—Rs. 4,00,000 ;



(4) the reparation for shielding Haggerston from justice—Rs. 45,000 ; (5) the reimbursement of the amount forced out from the Dacca factory for payment to the picars—Rs. 44,000 ; (6) the amount extorted from the merchants at Hooghly—Rs. 12,000 ; (7) the reparation for demolishing and plundering the Malda factory—Rs. 1,50,000 ; (8) the demurrage for 3 years' shipping—Rs. 20,00,000 ; (9) the debts owed by the natives in Bengal—Rs. 8,00,000 ; (10) the amount extorted by way of presents—Rs. 2,00,000 ; (11) the compensation for besieging the Hooghly factory and on account of the death of Agent Beard and 4 men—Rs. 3,00,000 ; (12) the loss incurred owing to the burning of the old factory and of the goods in it in the skirmish at Hooghly on 28 October, 1686—Rs. 3,00,000 ; (13) the charges on account of war preparation in England for 1000 men and 20 ships—Rs. 20,00,000 ; and (14) the capital investment in factory buildings in Bengal—Rs. 1,30,000. Besides, Charnock wanted to conclude a treaty of 12 articles relating to grant of certain privileges.<sup>75</sup> The three Commissioners signed the draft on 11 January 1687 on behalf of the Nawab and sent it for Shaista Khan's confirmation. Charnock remained at Sutanati from 23 December, 1686 till 9 February, 1687. The Nawab got enraged and returned the articles unsigned in the second week of February, 1687. He threatened the English for making such demands and asked the Governors to drive out the English from Bengal "never more to trade therein".<sup>76</sup>

### 3. *The showdown at Hijili*

The Governor, Shaista Khan sent his General Abdul Samad with a force of 200 horse to Hooghly in the second week of February, 1687 contrary to the Laws of Nations. So Charnock had no alternative but to fight the Moghul. He left Sutanati on the 9th and on his way down to Hijili burned the Moghul salt godowns at Matia-bruz and on the 11th assaulted the fort at Great Tanna (Muckwa Tanna). Capt. Nicholson was sent with one-half of the fleet and force to take possession of the island of Hijili. Charnock with the rest arrived at Hijili on 27 February, 1787. By that time it had already surrendered to Capt. Nicholson and Malik Qasim the Commander deserted the fort. Charnock made arrangement for

75. *Ibid.*, 60-61.

76. *Ibid.*, 64-69.

the protection of Hijili. The fort stood 3 miles away from the main landing stage.<sup>76</sup> It was an island in Contai subdivision in Midnapore district and notorious for its pestilential air and blackish water. A great many men died daily. Abdul Samad found it the most opportune moment to commence his operations. He landed on the island on the 28th May with 700 cavalry and 200 gunmen and captured a small battery opposite to the Moghul fortification. They killed Lt. Richard Francis and took his wife and child as prisoners. Charnock held on the ground for 4 days against the Moghul forces with his garrison of 100 fighting men. He was in a perilous position, when a timely relief came on June 1, in the form of 70 seamen in Capt. Denham's ship. Abdul samad was Camouflaged with a novel stratagem, that is, by a show of constant supply of fresh recruits from European shipping. Charnock dropped all his soldiers out of the fort by one and two at a time under battery to the water side and thereafter drew them up all together in arms, marched them up to the fort with drum-beating and trumpet-sounding. This led the enemy to sue for peace on 4 June, 1787. On the 5th a cessation of arms was declared at 12 o'clock. According to the peace agreement the fortifications at Hijili were delivered to the Moghul General on 11 June and Charnock marched with half the fleet to Uluberia and Little Thana. He spent 3 months at Uluberia in expectation of the Nawab's *parwana* in confirmation of the articles agreed upon with Abdul Samad. The first *parwana* being imperfect, a second came and Charnock decided "to go up to Chutanuttee".<sup>77</sup>

#### 4. *Balasore sacked*

To terrorise the Moghul forces Job Charnock ordered Captains Bromwell and Thomas March on 8 February 1687 to sack Balasore. An assault was made on 14 Moghul ships. The booty was much more. One of the ships had goods worth Rs. 2,00,000. In one night the English became masters of the old town and port of Balasore. Next day the war was carried into the new town of Balasore. The English soldiers killed all sorts of people that came in their way and plundered lacks of rupes. The engagement continued for 6 days and 6 nights at Balasore and the Company's factory at Balasore was demolished after the departure of the English soldiers. Two Muslim ships—one of Shaista Khan and

77. Ibid, 63-64, 69-71.

the other of Prince Azam—were made a prize of by Capt. Bromwell on the Balasore Road. They were brought to Hijili. Charnock became displeased with the book of Admiralty kept by the Judge, Capt. John Nicholson on account of prize goods.<sup>78</sup>

#### 5. *Charnock's one-year stay at Sutanati*

The Bengal Governor, Shaista Khan's second *parwana* had permitted the English Company to go up to Sutanati and Job Charnock, the Company's Agent took steps accordingly in September, 1687. Soldiers were retained. Moreover, the President was asked to send ammunition and 100 swords. A good number of Portuguese soldiers were brought from Fort St. George for the protection of Sutanati. The Company's trade was in a low profile. The President agreed with Charnock that there might be "conveniences at Chuttanattee or thereabouts but to think of building a factory before (they) were firmly settled would be very hazardous". Hence, it was considered necessary to refer the matter to the Company's consideration. Charnock remained at Sutanati till 8 November, 1688 when he was forced to leave the place with bag and baggage under orders of Captain Heath.<sup>79</sup>

#### 6. *Captain Heath's adventures*

Charnock's plan of reorganizing the trade in Bengal and of making a firm settlement at Sutanati suffered a setback because of the arrival of Captain William Heath on September 20, 1788—he was armed with an extra-ordinary commission from the Court of Directors that superseded the old Agent. The thing was that they were in the dark about the clash at Hooghly, the sacking of Balasore, the showdown at Hijili, the Sutanati settlement and the like. However, the Court of Directors made it clear that Chittagong expedition was to be postponed if its purpose could be achieved by other means.<sup>80</sup> The Captain was asked by the President and Council at Fort St. George to take the advice of the Agent and Council at Sutanati in all cases.<sup>81</sup> The Nawab's emissary sent

78. Hedges's Diary II, 62, 79 ; Letters to Fort St. George for 1688, Public Sundries, No. 3 (1915), 19-24 ; letters to Fort St. George for 1686-87, No. III (1687), 103.

79. Nair, *op. cit.*, 260-65.

80. Court to Fort, Jan 25, 1687/88, para 67 : Despatches from England 1686-92 (1929), 117.

81. Hedges's Diary II, 81.

Kolak Beg in advance to Agent Charnock on November 8, and the latter reached Baranager. But Capt. Heath had not the patience to await the Moghul official's arrival. So he left at 9 A.M. Sutanati for Balasore with Charnock and 11 vessels.<sup>82</sup>

The Governor of Balasore had detained the goods of the Company and of private persons at the port. The news of the arrival of a fleet alarmed him; so he placed the Company's factors—Henry Stanley and John Haynes—at Balasore under house arrest. Capt. Heath sent two messengers to the Governor for communication of his demand for the Company's men and goods ashore. Charnock advised that it would be better to wait for the *purwana* to come from Dacca, but Capt. Heath was in a hurry and landed his troops at the Point of Sand. The old Balasore port was taken and the Governor had deserted the town, carrying all Englishmen ashore. Capt. Heath failed to secure the release of Englishmen. The old Balasore was demolished on 21 December. The English soldiers plundered the Moghul and Portuguese houses and killed some innocent people. The fleet then sailed for Chittagong on December 23. A consultation was held on January 21, 1688 and it was held that the town was well-protected and could not be maintained even if taken. Despite the advice of Charnock to wait and see, Capt. Heath sailed for Arrakan on January 27 and arrived there on the 31st. The party was there for 28 days. The fleet departed from the Arrakan Port on 16 February and sailed for Madras. Capt. Heath's adventure proved a failure.<sup>83</sup> It may be summed up in the words of Job Charnock thus: "Capt. Heath tripping from port to port without effecting anything, hath not only rendered our Nation ridiculous, but hath unhinged all treaties, by which means the trade of Bengal will be very difficult to be ever regained".<sup>84</sup>

## V. Charnock founds Calcutta

### (a) Background

The Company's Agent Job Charnock and other servants arrived at Fort St. George on March 3, 1689 after Capt. Heath's futile

82. Bengal Past and Present (1925), 170, 177, 186 (BPP).

83. Madras Diary (1689), 19, 21, 23-4, 32, 34.

84. Hedges's Diary II, 85.

expedition to Chittagong. Meanwhile Nawab Bahadur Khan had complained on September 1, 1688 to President Eilihu Yale about Charnock's "irregular proceedings" at Hooghly. He wanted from the President some "discreet persons" to negotiate a settlement. Two of the Company's factors—Charles Eyre and Roger Braddyll—had been in Dacca since June 1688 for conducting negotiations with the Nawab. So Yale did not send any other person. Bahadur Khan was hardened against the English by Charnock's withdrawal from Calcutta on November 8, Capt. Heath's sack of Balasore, his chicanery at Chittagong and unfriendly negotiations with the Arrakanese Raja.<sup>85</sup> Bahadur Khan was recalled in April, 1689 and Ibrahim Khan the Nawab of Patna appointed in his place. Meanwhile Ibrahim sent for Charles King, a sergeant in the Company's service at Patna and came to know why the English had left Bengal. Ibrahim reached Dacca by 1st July. He set all Englishmen free from the prison. He took steps on his own initiative to resettle the English trade and issued a *parwana* on 2nd July and it assured the Company of a "trade upon former privileges and to assist in the recovery of debts".<sup>86</sup> The Emperor was enraged by the war-mongering of Sir John Child and he ordered to extirpate the infidels from his dominions. However, Ibrahim Khan extended his clemency to all English men.<sup>87</sup> At a consultation held on February 17, 1690 at Fort St. George and attended by Charnock and his Council it was decided to send a "Europe ship and two or three country vessels". The *Madapallam* was ordered to go to Bengal along with the *Princess of Denmark*. However, the *Princess's* departure for Bengal was delayed till the receipt of the Emperor's *firman*. Again a consultation was held over this at Fort St. George on "Tuesday, primo July, 1690" with Capt. Haddock at the mount, President Eilihu Yale, Job Charnock, John Cheney, William Fraser, Thomas Wavell, Thomas Gray and William Hatsell were the other members. Yale, Fraser and Gray were opposed to sending down the Agent and Council to Bengal, whereas Charnock, Cheney, Wavell and Hatsell favoured the proposal. It was accordingly resolved to des-

85. Nair, *op. cit.*, 309.

86. *Diary and Consultation Book of 1689* (1916), 85-6.

87. *Ibid.* of 1690 (1917), Jan. 23 at 5, Feb. 11 at 10, Feb. 17 at 13, May 5 at 31.

patch the *Princess of Denmark* with Agent Charnock and his Council to Bengal and the resettlement of Bengal was notified to all so as to enable them to proceed to Sutanati.<sup>88</sup>

It may be noted that President Yale, Fraser and Gray were opposed to sending down Agent Charnock and his Council to Bengal in the absence of the Emperor's *firman* and the Company's specific orders. On the other hand Charnock had 35 years' experience in the oriental mode of thinking, took the bold step of returning to Bengal and rightly became the founder of Calcutta. It has been rightly observed : "If Job Charnock was the father of Calcutta, Ibrahim Khan certainly was its godfather."<sup>89</sup> Preparations were made for the return to Bengal from July 1 to 14. Charnock and his Council took 1000 pagodas on July 7. He decided to board the *Princess* on July 15, 1690. Their departure in the *Princess* accompanied by *Madapallam* on the evening of July 18, 1690 was announced with a salute of guns. Aurangzeb's *firman* of April 23, 1690 to Ibrahim Khan ran thus : "It has been the good fortune of the English to *repent* them of all their irregular past proceedings and they have petitioned for their lives and a *pardon* for their faults, which out of my extra-ordinary favour towards them, have (been) accordingly granted. Therefore upon receipt of my *phyrmand* you must not create them any further trouble, but let them trade freely in your government as formerly, and this order I expect you see strictly observed." Eyre and Braddyll also wrote to President Yale on May 28 and June 2, 1690 "of the Nabob's pressing invitation for our return and settlement in Bengal... the Nabob being well satisfied of the King's reconciliation with us".<sup>91</sup> Charnock and his Council changed the *Princess* at Balasore on July 28, for the Ketch *Madapallam* and arrived at Sutanati on August 24, 1690.<sup>92</sup>

(b) *A life sketch of Job Charnock*

A brief life sketch of Job Charnock is attempted below :

(1) *Parentage and education*—The Charnocks were of a Lanca-

88. Ibid. July 1 at 49-53.

89. Nair, op. cit. 330.

90. Ibid at 331 (quoted).

91. Rankin, J. T.—'Dacca Diaries' in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* N. S. Vol. XVI, No. 4 (1920). 126.

92. Wilson—Early Annals I, 124-5.

shire family. They assumed the local name of their dwelling places in Leyland Hundred and gave the villages the epithets of Charnock Richard, Heath Charnock and Charnock Gagard as mentioned in the 13th century. A branch of the Charnock Family settled in London, and another at Hullcott, Bedfordshire in the 16th century. Richard Charnock, the father of Job Charnock was a London citizen. He left a Will drawn up on April 2, 1663, giving £ 20 and £ 600 to his sons, Stephen and Job.<sup>93</sup> Stephen got the probate on June 2, 1665 and power was reserved to issue the same to Job, the other executor on his return to England. Charnock's death occurred on January 10, 1693. But his date of birth is not known. Sir R. C. Temple states that Stephen (Job's elder brother) "was born in 1628 and Job some two or three years later".<sup>94</sup> This gives Job's birth year as 1631 (1628 + 3). It finds support from Moorhouse also when he says that "Charnock died at the age of 62".<sup>94</sup> For, by subtracting 62 from 1693 one gets the number 1631. Wilson says that "he may have been imperfectly educated".<sup>95</sup> But this seems untenable in view of his scholarly pursuits. Bowry visited him thrice and said of him: "The English chief Job Charnock hath learned the Persian language as perfect as any Persian born and bred".<sup>96</sup> Marshall the Indologist was a subordinate to Charnock at Patna (1670-72). He took Charnock as an authority on Indian Astronomy and other topics on India.<sup>97</sup> It may thus be assumed that Job Charnock had a liberal education. But it is too much to hold, on the basis of the theory of "perhaps", that "he was educated, like his brother, at Emmanuel College, Cambridge".<sup>98</sup>

(ii) *An Indian wife*—Charnock reached India in 1656. In those days it was not possible for the married servants of the company to bring their family. Moreover, English ladies were unable to

93. Temple, R. C.—'Job Charnock—his parentage and will' in *Indian Antiquary*. Vol. 46 (1917), 256-60.

94. Moorhouse, G.—Calcutta (1983), 31.

95. Wilson, op. cit., I, 142-3.

96. Bombay, T.—A geographical account of countries round the Bay of Bengal, 1669-79 (ed.). R. C. Temple (1905), 224.

97. Khan, S. A.—John Marshall in India (1668-72), 1927 at 217

98. Nair, op. cit., 422.

withstand the rigours of 6 months' sea voyage. In these circumstances they used to marry in this country. Thus Gabriel Boughton was married to a "Mogullana". Richard Edwards and a few others had either native wives or formed liason with them. In fact Edwards had a Brahmin mistress.<sup>99</sup> This was the prevalent custom in those days. Since there is no mention of any lady's name as the wife of Job Charnock during the arrivals from 1666 to 1678 the inference is that Charnock must have taken an Indian wife. And this is evident from an imperfect letter dated "Hooghly, the 16th Nov. 1700" written by Sir Edward Littleton, formerly Chief at Cossimbazar, and his Council at Calcutta to the Court of the English Company on the subject of marriages with natives: "taking *Jentues* meets often into great trouble also. though but very poor people having all of them *Husbands* very early. Who though they cohabit not, yet on such occasion apply to the Government where its never ended but with great charge and trouble. As in the case of *Mr. Job Charnock* and the woman he kept though of a mean caste and great poverty, which occasioned great trouble and charge to company a long while at *Parna* and afterwards some also at *Cossimbazar*." This finds support from William Hedges's Diary from October 25 to December 15 1682. He noted on December 1, 1682 a complaint made by "a Gentoo" against Charnock of "keeping a Gentoo woman of his kindred these 19 years—a Gentoo's wife (her husband still living or but lately dead) who was run away from her husband and stolen all his money and jewels. The Nabob sent 12 soldiers to seize Charnock; but he escaping (or bribing the men) they took his Vakil and kept him 2 months in prison, the soldiers lying all this while at the factory gate till Charnock compounded the business for Rs. 3000 in money, 5 pieces of broad cloth and some sword-blades. Such troubles as these he has had diverse times at Cossimbazar; and whenever she or Charnock dies the pretence will certainly be heavy on the company".<sup>100</sup> From these two statements it is clear that Littleton and Hedges are agreed on two points. *First*, the woman concerned was a Gentoo. *Second*, this affair involved Charnock and the Company in trouble. Hedges's Diary shows that

99. Foster, W.—The English factories in India (1670-77), 376.

100. O.C. 7200; Hedges's Diary Vol. II, 209

101. Hedges's Diary I, 52.



Charnock and the Gentoo's wife came to live as husband and wife since 1663, *i.e.*, 19 years ago from 1682.

(iii) *Children*—A question arises : What's the name of the lady ? Various answers have been given. Moorhouse gives her name 'Maria',<sup>102</sup> so does Desmond Doig : "Four children were born to Charnock and his Maria".<sup>103</sup> Their statements are categorical. But these are disbelieved by some on the ground that they are made by journalists who have "freedom" to give names. It is a queer logic. As observed by Mark Twain in respect of the journalist ; "Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as you please". Names are facts that remain invariant throughout, though their wanderings are variable. But the fiction-writers are not subject to this. Thus P. C. Chunder and S. Ghose name her Angela and Lila.<sup>104</sup> They "sound more like gossip than precise reporting", as observed by Moorhouse. The name "Maria" means "desperate". Such names are very common amongst the lower castes. This gives credence to Moorhouse's statement.

Charnocks had three daughters and a son. The daughters—Mary, Elizabeth and Katherine—were baptised at St. Mary's Church, Madras, while Charnock had been there on 19 August, 1689. The baptised register does not record their dates of birth. The Chaplain was Rev. John Evans, the first Chaplain of Bengal. Mary was married to Charles Eyre, who succeeded Job Charnock as Agent from 1694 to 1699. She died on 19 February, 1696/97. Elizabeth was married to William Bowridge about 1693 and she died on 2 August, 1753. Katherine was born in 1682 and married to Jonathan White, Secretary to the Bengal Council. She died in her first child birth in 1701. Charnock had a son who died unnamed in Calcutta. Though Charnock's daughters were born of an Indian lady, they did not suffer from any social stigma. It is found that they were received by the English society.<sup>105</sup>

(iv) *The sifting of fact from fiction*—Captain Alexander Hamilton has noted thus : "The country being overspread with *Paganism*, the custom of wives' burning with their husbands is also practised here. Before the Moghul's war, Charnock went one

102. Moorhouse, *op. cit.*, 29.

103. Doig, D.—*Calcutta : An artist's impression* (1969), Introduction, 2.

104. Chunder, P. C.—*Charnocker Badhu* ; Ghose, S.—*Kimbadantir Deshe*.

105. Nair's *Calcutta in the 17th century*, 431-35.

time with his ordinary guard of soldiers to see a young widow act that tragical catastrophe, but he was so smitten with the widow's beauty, that he sent his guards to take her by force from her executioners and conducted her to his own lodgings. They lived lovingly many years and had several children".<sup>106</sup> And this story has been made more colourful by Dr. Norman Chevers' verses appearing in the *Englishman* in July 1869. They were subsequently mauled by Rudyard Kipling and introduced into his "Light that failed". The verses constituted, it was alleged, the "poetic epitaph" of one Joseph Townsend, the "Pilot of the Ganges", whose tombstone was said to have been placed around Charnock's mausoleum in St. John's Church. And this was treated as "corroboration" by Cotton, of Hamilton's story: H. C. Biswas also followed the myth.<sup>107</sup> The verses were—

'Shoulder to shoulder, Joe, my boy, into the crowd like a wedge !  
Out with your hangers, messmates, but donot strike with the edge !  
'Cries Charnock', scatter the faggots ! Double that Brahmin in two !  
'The tall pale widow is mine, Joe-the little brown girl's for you !'

On this Corfield made certain comments. *First*, in each case "Job" has been substituted for "Joe"—a change that has materially altered the general idea sought to be conveyed by the poet. *Second*, the verses said to have been found on the tomb "are not so to be found and they never were on the tombstone, not yet is the stone to be found on the tomb of 'Joe' the 'Pilot'. *Third*, the Pilot's name was Townshend, not Townsend. *Finally*, "the stone with a verseless inscription is now embedded with many others in the pavement surrounding Charnock's mausoleum in St. John's Churchyard". He concludes: "Thus, it is that history goes wrong".<sup>108</sup> With regard to Hamilton's story about the rescue of the *Sati*, Yule commented: "It is not likely that a European at Patna or elsewhere in the country could have ventured in those days to abduct a *Sati* widow from the pyre".<sup>109</sup> Holwell also endorsed this:

106. Hamilton, A.—A New account of the East Indies, (ed) Foster, II, 5.

107. Cotton, H.F.A.—Calcutta old and new (Revised edn. 1980) 436; H. C. Biswas—'Job Charnock's Hindu wife: A rescued *Sati*', in *Hindusthan Review*, Sept., 1910, Vol. XX; No. 133 at 298-301.

108. Corfield, W.—'Some historical myths' in *Hindusthan Review* December, 1910, Vol. 22, No. 136, at 657-8.

109. Hedges's Diary, II, 91

"It is currently said and believed (how true we will not aver) that the wife of Charnock was by him snatched from sacrifice ; the outrage is considered by the *Gentoos*, an atrocious and wicked violation of their sacred rites and privileges".<sup>110</sup>

The cock-offering was connected with the worship of *Panch Pir* : When a disciple was initiated a cock used to be sacrificed. And this custom was prevalent amongst the Hindus and Mahomedans. It is a tradition with the people that the corn-spirit is treated as a cock. In parts of Germany, Hungary, Poland the Corn-Spirit is killed in the form of a Cock. The reapers place a live cock in the corn to be cut last. They chase it over the field and afterwards strike off its head with a sickle.<sup>111</sup> However, the cock-offering has been explained by H. T. Prinsep in his poem "Job Charnock" as being a mandate by Charnock's wife in a dream :

She died, and her Spirit appeared in a dream,

While Charnock's eye fresh poured the scolding tear :

His race from a terrible curse to redeem,

Before Kali's image to vow she did seem.

That a fowl should be slain o'er her grave each year.

This shows the current tradition about Charnock's cock-offering

#### (v) *Career and Character*

##### A. *Career*

Job Charnock arrived in India in 1655 or 1656. Maurice Thompson floated a company in 1655 and a new Charter was granted to the resuscitated London East India Company on October, 1, 1657.<sup>112</sup> Thompson made it a point to elect those who were "an honour to religion, and able and honest to do the Company good service". And Charnock was appointed the fourth at Cossimbazar.<sup>114</sup> Charnock joined the Company at £ 20 per annum.<sup>115</sup> The factories in Bengal (Balasore, Hooghly, Cossim-

110. Holwell, J. Z.—Interesting historical events, Part II, 99.

111. Frazer, J. G.—The Golden Bough (abridged edn, 1963), 593.

112. H. T. Prinsep—Specimens of Ballad Poetry, applied to the Tales and traditions of the East (1862), : Nair's "Job Charnock", 206.

113. Dodwell, H. H.—The Cambridge History of India, Vol. V, 94-5.

114. Court Minutes 1655—59, at 211-13.

115. Hedges's Diary Vol. III 189.

bazar and Patna) had been constituted into an Agency in the middle of February, 1658 independent of Fort St. George, but under the control of the President and Council at Surat.<sup>116</sup> Though the home authorities had appointed Charnock for Cossimbazar, he was retained at Hooghly by the Agent. He reached Patna in February 1659 and spent the next 20 years therein supplying saltpetre to the Company. The Patna factory was situated at 'Singhee' (Singhiya), near Lalganj, 15 miles north of the city, on the left bank of the river Gandak. The original contract was for 5 years as his memorial dated February 23, 1663/64 shows. He took a decision to return to England, but was persuaded by the new Chief to stay on, provided he was made the Chief. Charnock changed his mind and remained the head of the Patna factory from 1664 to 1669. The court of Directors confirmed this. On October 25, 1671 his salary was increased to £ 40. On December 24, 1675 £ 20 per annum was granted as gratuity to Charnock. He was appointed Chief at Cossimbazar on January 3, 1679 and second of Council in the Bay. But this transfer was put off pending the completion of the year's saltpetre business.<sup>117</sup>

Job Charnock's career in India covers 36 years divided into four periods: (1) the Patna period (1658-80); (2) the Cossimbazar period (1680-85); (3) the militant period (1686-90); and (4) the settlement period (1690-93). In the first period he had conflict with the Agent and Governor, Streyntsham Master, who was dismissed for his highhandedness.<sup>118</sup> The second period is marked by Charnock's quarrels with his superior, Matthias Vincent and William Hedges. Vincent was notorious for appropriation of 2½ per cent *dastak* for himself and this was condemned by the Company. Ultimately he was dismissed. Hedges developed enmity with Charnock—he was dismissed from service by the court of Directors in December, 1683.<sup>119</sup> The third period related to Charnock's war with the Moghul, of which an account has already been given earlier. And the fourth period began from August 24, 1690 (O.S) when he landed on Sutanuti.

116. Foster, W.—The English factories in India (1655-60), 188-9.

117. Hedges's Diary II, 45-6, 47; Foster (1661-64), 393, (1670-77), 330-31, 338, 376, 415, (1679-84), 195; D.A. and Consultation Book (1679-80), 41.

118. Foster, (1678-84), 39.

119. Nair, op. cit., 466.

### B. Character

Orme speaks of Job Charnock thus : "(He) was a man of courage, without military experience ; but impatient to take revenge on a Government, from which he had personally received the most ignominious treatment, having been imprisoned and scourged by the nabab". Generally, the word "pious" is used in its classical sense as an equivalent for "dutiful". Thus Aenas was *pious* because from the blazing streets of sacked and fallen Troy he bore away on his shoulders his ancient father. It is an act of *Piety*, says W. K. Firminger, "to do homage to all that was unselfish, faithful and brave in the man who chose for us the cradle" of a city of cities. As nicely put by C. R. Wilson : "Charnock possessed the one rare but absolutely needful *virtue* of *disinterested honesty*, a virtue which must have been at this difficult time to retain ; a virtue which must have raised up for him scores of secret enemies ; a virtue which makes us slow to believe evil of one, who inspite of all petty detraction, will always occupy a place among those who have the sovereign honour of being founders of commonwealths. Coarse and sinful he may well have been, for he seems to have been *imperfectly educated*, and he passed an unprecedented length of years in Indian service. I prefer to forget the minor blemishes and to remember only his resolute determination, his clear-sighted wisdom, his honest self-devotion and leave him to sleep on in the heart of the city which he founded, looking for his blessed resurrection and the coming of Him by whom alone he ought to be judged".<sup>1-2</sup>

• Charnock was the first Englishman to give up his elaborate wigs, cut his hair short and take up Indian dress. This won him admiration from the people of Bengal, Behar and Orissa. He lived at Patna for many years, during which he learned Persian, the court language of the day. He acquired also the local superstition and used to worship the *Panch Pir* or five saints, with the sacrifice of a cock, after the manner of the people of Behar. The *Panch Pir* were invoked on occasions of danger. Both the Hindus and Mchomedans worshipped the saints. Hence Charnock followed an eclectic religion consisting of the *Panch Pir* as well as of Christianity, just as Akbar did with his *Dih-i-Ilahi* in 1582. Moreover the cock-offering resembles that of Socrates who said

to Crito : "I owe a cock to Asclepius". Now Asclepius was the God of healing and the words would mean, according to John William Kaye, "I am just about to be cured for that melody called life". It was a proverbial expression in rural Scotland to say in regard to a grateful sense of favour conferred : "I owe you a day in harvest". Charnock's cock-offering might have these implications. On the other hand, his Christianity was manifest in the baptism of his daughters. The baptismal register book of St. Mary's Church (Madras) has an entry : "August 19th, 1689. Charnock, Mary, Elizabeth and Katherine, daughters of Job Charnock, baptised by J. Evans, Francis Ellis, Godfather, Ann Seaton and Margary Heathfield, Godmothers".

Charnock's will was dated from Sutanuti on 9 January, '93. It vindicates his faith in Christianity, for it starts with the words "In the name of God Amen" and makes a bequest to the poor of his native parish. The will also testifies to Charnock's kindheartedness. For he earmarked legacies to his native servants as well, namely Badhi Das,\* Ghanshyam and Dalab. His character may be summed up in the words of H. T. Prinsep, son of John Prinsep (1746-1870) thus :

No light thing the pious Job Charnock deems

A warning by spirit unearthly given :

He believed in Christ, and he believeth in dreams.

And yearly the the vow of his loved one redeems,

On the day that her spirit departed to he ven.††-

(c) *The Sutanuti settlement*

(i) *Reasons for the selection*—Job Charnock, the founder of Calcutta tried three places on the Hooghly river before he fixed upon Sutanuti (Calcutta), namely, Hooghly, Uluberia and the island of Hijili. The towns of Hooghly and Uluberia (at the point where the Damodar River joins the Hooghly) were both situated on the western bank and completely exposed to attack by the Moghul enemy advancing from the west. The island of Hijili near the mouth of the river seemed suitable at first sight ; but it could be easily reached by the Moghul arm. and was, besides, in a malarious swamp. And the last site Charnock tried was Sutanuti (Chuttanuttie).<sup>121</sup> Earlier the Court of committees of the London

121. Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan—"The Moghul Empire" in *the History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 7, 521 note 24.

Company had warned their East-India Captains "to take notice of the Channel and depth of the river Ganges and the entrance thereinto, to keep a journal and to make exact drafts of their depths, reaches and currents and also how the sands usually vary".<sup>122</sup> The idea of establishing a fortified post somewhere near the mouth of the Hooghly, as the best means of protecting the English trade from the oppressive exactions of the Nawab of Bengal and his officials seems to have been first suggested by William Hedges who was Agent and Governor of the East India Company's affairs in the Bay of Bengal during 1682-84. However, "the choice of Chutanuttee or Calcutta to be the site of the fort must be ascribed to Job Charnock who actually began hostilities with the Nawab."<sup>123</sup> Under Charnock's direction the English withdrew from Hooghly, and Charnock after occupying Chutanuttee temporarily on December 29, 1686 on his way down the river from Hooghly formulated twelve proposals, known as the "Chutanuttee articles" in January 1687. In one of them he demanded "a sufficient quantity of land to build a fort on". He resolved that he would not trade until the articles were confirmed. He was allowed to settle at Uluberia, but came up the river to Chutanuttee a second time in September, 1687 with all his ships to "recruit provisions" and "spin out the monsoon". Charnock remained at Sutanuti till November 8, 1688 when he was forced to leave it under orders of Captain Heath.

In this connection it may be noted that the court of Directors also agreed with Charnock as to the selection of Sutanuti for a factory. Thus in the General Letter dated February 15, 1689 addressed to the Fort St. George at Madras the court said : "Since he (Charnock) likes Chuttanuttee so well we are content he should build a factory there".<sup>124</sup> In another General Letter dated September 11, 1689 addressed to Fort. St. George, Madras the Court wrote : "If the Moors will allow us to fortify at Chuttanuttee where our ships may go up and ride within the command of our guns it would be much better for us".<sup>125</sup> Sutanuti held attraction for Charnock for the following reasons :

1. Sutanuti had advantages which others—Hooghly, Uluberia and Hijili—lacked.

122. Hedges's Diary, III, 199.

123. Wilson, C. R.—Old Fort William in Bengal (1906), Vol. I : Introduction, xviii.

124. Hedges's Diary II, 75-6.

125. Despatches from England 1686-1692, at 177.

2. Provisions were plentiful at its hats and bazars.
3. There was a broad road for communication by land with the interior, yet the village was an island and could be defended.
4. It was a secure position for a naval power : to attack it the Hooghly must be crossed and the attacking force would be liable to destruction in the act.
5. The village itself and the country on the north, on the east and on the south could be obtained, if necessary, on the most easy terms.
6. The Hooghly had become deep below the town for large ships to ride in.
7. There existed a landing ghat and a *pucca* building, which might be used for the factors in case of need.
8. There were no intriguing factions as at Hooghly or Cossimbazar.
9. The place being marshy and unhealthy, the costs of acquisition of lands and settlement thereon would be cheaper.
10. The tradespeople such as the Setts and Bysacks had established business at the place and so articles of export could be had.
11. The friction between the Nawab's troops and the English soldiers could be avoided because of distance between them.
12. Being nearer the sea than Hooghly, it afforded greater facilities for sea-borne trade and for withdrawal.

(ii) *Enter Job Churnock*

I. *Newsreel* (1)

The 24th day in August, 1690 was in the height of the rainy season in Bengal. The muddy waters of the Hooghly heaved sullenly in thick turbid swell with the ceaseless downpour of the descending rain and the rising tide rushing in from the distant sea. The outgoing and incoming forces formed great circling whirlpools in which floated carcasses of drowned animals and



trees with tangled mass of roots and branches resembled some living monster stretching its octopus-like arms. Again and again were borne on the rushing waters human forms charred from the funeral-pyre and to be devoured by crocodiles, vultures, crows and jackles haunting the waves and shores. Slowly came with the rising tide a varied fleet of merchant vessels and country boats from their last safe anchorage. A large budgerow (house-boat) stopped off the bank near a dirty straggling village Chuttanuttee. She had the English flag flying at the masthead and armed men both European and native. A portly-looking man stood on the deck with a *Chattah* (umbrella) of scarlet cloth over his head. He was dressed in a *suit* in half-Flemish, half-Spanish fashion. A broad-leafed Flemish beaver hat adorned his head with two feathers falling to the left side and below were seen long grey locks. He wore a short doublet of fawn—covered satin with a light cloak of *tussa* or country silk. His neck showed a ruff and falling collar of lace. He wore round his waist a broad buff belt, girt with a massive gold buckle. From the belt was hanging a long rapier with the ornamented stocks of a pair of pistols above the upper edge of the belt. His bushy eyebrows and grizzled moustaches gave him an air of sternness. A salaaming crowd received him while he was carried ashore.

The man was Job Charnock from Madras. He ordered Captain Brooke to come up with his "county ship" bearing a small company of Englishmen, the servants of the East India Company. Their destination was also Chuttanuttee, where they had traded at various intervals for several years. Steering for "the great Neem tree" near the Anandamoyee Kali Temple of Nimtola, which was the "sea mark", the worthy Captain brought his vessel to a safe anchorage in the deep water below the high bank on which the village stood.<sup>127</sup>

## II. *Camera eye* (1)

### 1. *The arrival: 24 August, 1690*

The Chuttanuttee Diary<sup>128</sup> records the event thus: "1690 August 24 (Sunday). The day, at Sankraal (sea crowl) ordered Captain Brooke to come up with his vessel to Chuttanutty, where

127. Blechynden, K.—*Calcutta past and present* (1905), 1-2; *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 7, Jan.-June, 1847, at 259-60.

128. Wilson, C. R.—*Old Fort William in Bengal* (1906), Vol. 1, 6.

we arrived at noon, but found the place in a deplorable condition, nothing being left for our present accommodation, and the rain falling day and night. We are forced to betake ourselves to boats, which, considering the season of the year, is very unhealthy, Mullick Burcoodar<sup>129</sup> and the country people, at our leaving this place (in October, 1688) burning and carrying away what they could. On our arrival the Governor of Tana sent his servant with a compliment".

One word about the date, "1690, August 24 (Sunday) : " There are two methods of reckoning time—solar and lunar. The length of the solar year is 365 days 5 hours 48 minutes and 46 seconds, which is the time taken by the earth to complete its orbit ; whereas that of the lunar year of 12 months of 29½ days is 354 days 8 hours and 48 minutes. And the two must be harmonised. Because the year is not exactly divisible by months and days, a practice arose of making arbitrary divisions and inserting in calating extra days or months. The present Gregorian Calendar evolved from the Roman Calendar as reformed (45 B.C.) by Julius Caesar. In Julian Calendar April, June, September and November had 30 days ; February 28 days with 29 days every fourth year called 'leap year' ; and other months 31 days. The Julian Calendar with its leap year fixed the length of the year at 365½ days, which was about 11 minutes too long. The cumulative error was rectified by the Gregorian Calendar (new style) introduced in Italy in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII, whereby the century years do not count as leap years unless divisible by 400. Gregory directed the day following the feast of St. Francis, that is to say, the 5th of October, to be reckoned the 15th October (Friday). By this regulation the vernal equinox which then happened on the 11th March was restored to the 21st. From 1582 to 1700 the difference between the old and new style continued to be 10 days.

England continued with the Julian Calendar till the middle of the 18th century when the British Parliament enacted the Calendar (new style) Act, 1750 whereby she adopted the Gregorian Calendar from Thursday, September 14, 1752. —Thursday as September 3, 1752 according to the Julian Calendar. Job Charnock recorded

129. It means "the small or junior officer" below the rank of Nawab. *Eksan, Sharadiya Samkhya*, 1383 B S at 82.

130. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. IV, 571.

his date in Julian Calendar in which August 24, 1690 was a Sunday. And this was September 3, 1690 according to the Gregorian Calendar now in use. In this context September 3, 1990 would complete Calcutta's 300 years, since it is her birthday.

2. *A list of buildings absolutely necessary : 28 August, 1690*

Within four days of his arrival Job Charnock took the necessary steps to build a warehouse and other buildings. On 28 August, 1690 (Thursday) the Agent and his Councillors, Francis Ellis and Jeremiah Peachie at a consultation "Resolved that a letter be sent to Mr. Stanley and Mr. Mackrith (who had reached Hugli earlier by the *Kemphorne*) to come from Hugli and bring with them what Englishmen are there, that the war with the French may be proclaimed, and also that commissions be given to all commanders of ship in order to the prosecution of the same.

"In consideration that all the former buildings here are destroyed, it is resolved that such places be built as necessity requires and as cheap as possible, namely, (1) a warehouse, (2) a dining room, (3) the Secretary's office to be repaired, (4) a room to sort cloth in, (5) a cookroom with its conveniences, (6) an apartment for the Company's servants, (7) the Agent's and Mr. Peachie's houses to be repaired, which were part standing, and a house to be built for Mrs. Ellis, the latter being totally demolished, (8) the guard house.

"These to be done with mud walls and thatch till one can get ground whereupon to build a factory.

"Resolved that 2000 maunds of wheat and 200 maunds horse grain be brought of Malda, that being the cheapest place, and here to be provided 6,000 maunds of rice and 200 maunds butter and 200 maunds oyle (and 200 maunds oyle) to be sent to Fort St. George".

III. *Newsreel (2)*

Charnock had brought pagodas 210416 : 01 : 02 from Madras in addition to a quantity of European goods like broadcloth, tin, alum and the like. The Bengal merchants owed the Company about Rs. 4,00,000 at the time of Charnock's leaving Sutanuti on November 8, 1688. The Agent could not dispose of goods for the ready money in full. So he returned a part of the goods and money to Fort St. George, since there was no "safe godown to

secure them from damage". In the words of Yule, the President of Fort St. George : Charnock and his men were "little better than pensioners at large" at Sutanuti where they continued defenceless "contrary to all reason or consent of the Government".<sup>131</sup> They lived at Sutanuti "in a wild unsettled condition". They had neither "fortified houses nor godowns, only tents, huts and boats with the strange charge of near 100 : soldiers, guardship etc." Still they liked their "swampy Sutanuti" better than "sandy Madras". Charnock bought a great "Portuguese frigate for a guardship". Yule, however, feared that Charnock's stay at Sutanuti "would renew troubles and disoblige the worthy Nawab".<sup>132</sup>

#### IV. *Camera eye* (2)

Charnock employed a hundred soldiers for the security of Sutanuti with John Hill as their Captain. Hill was allowed to keep a punch-house and Billiard table gratis. 'Punch' was a preparation for liquor consisting of *punch* (five) ingredients—rum, arrack, country liquor, sugar, lemonjuice, water and spices. This was an entertainment house for strangers and he himself was an "open tempered man". And his wife turned a Papist.

The first English settlement of Chuttanuttee consisted of mud and straw hovels with a few masonry buildings. The chief defence was the flotilla of boats lying in the river. The renewed settlement established by Charnock in 1690 was of the same nature. However, the number of masonry buildings increased with the passage of time. In 1690 he issued a proclamation that persons desirous of living at Sutanuti could erect houses at pleasure on any site they chose in any portion of the waste land belonging to the Company. Since Nawab Ibrahim Khan had been aggrieved at Charnock's withdrawal from Hooghly and Nawab was not empowered to grant him a licence to settle at Sutanuti, the Agent could not enclose a "place where to build a factory in". As a result "nobody knew where, or how to build, but everyone built stragglingly where and how they pleased, even on the properest place for a factory and have dug holes and tanks that will cost the

131. Wilson, *op. cit.*, extract, No. 8 at 8-12 (O. C. No. 5770)

132. *Ibid.*, No. 8 at 10-12 (O.C. 5777).

133. Hedges's Diary II. 92.

Company money to fill up again, and the longer they run, the worse would be the evil."<sup>134</sup>

Portuguese and Armenian settlers clustered around the factory and their households exerted influence over some young Englishmen so as to lead them to "native habits", "black wives" and "heathenish prayers" in the settlement. Charnock had acquired the Jagirdar's *pucka* cutchery and the Portuguese Mass house. The former formed the first *pucka* lodgment of the Company's official staff and of its records, while the latter was destroyed by Sir John Goldsborough to put the factory and its servants into order.<sup>135</sup>

Since Sutanuti was a place where people could find neither an inn nor an eating house, Charnock decided on July 13, 1691 to license four "victualling houses" in the settlement on a payment of a licence fee of Rs. 50 each for the first year. The licences were renewable yearly and issued to "responsible people". And the houses were required to be furnished with "such accommodations as shall be convenient for the entertainment of persons" concerned.<sup>136</sup>

The *husbulhukum* (a sending to command) issued on February 10, 1691 by Emperor Aurangzeb under Assid Khan's seal to Kifayat Khan, his Dewan at Dacca granted free trade in Bengal for the Company on payment of an annual *piscash* (present) of Rs. 3,000 in lieu of customs as recommended by Ibrahim Khan. This indemnified the English against their past misdeeds and ensured that their future trade should start on the same footing as that under Prince Shuja's *Nishan* of August 13, 1651. Besides, came a *parwana* in 1691/92 from Nawab Ibrahim Khan, which confirmed the prior privileges on payment of an annual *Piscash* of Rs. 3,000.<sup>137</sup>

Charnock thereafter improved the Company's trade within the next two years. During his 3 years' Agency exports from Bengal were: (1) 1690—£ 3,970 (3.3%); (2) 1691—£ 37,800 (45.3%); (3) 1692—£ 2,773 (10.5%). The export of saltpetre increased from 4533 cwt in 1690 to 6107 cwt in 1692; raw silk exports rose from nil in 1690 to 7184 lb in 1691, whereas tex-

134. Ray, A. K.—A short history of Calcutta, 47.

135. Hedges's Diary II, 94.

136. Wilson—Old Fort William, I, No. 9 at 9.

137. Stewart, C.—A history of Bengal (1910).

files showed an export of 71130 pieces in 1691.<sup>138</sup> After planting the seed of the British empire Charnock breathed his last on January 10, 1693. A mausoleum was erected by Charnock's son-in-law Charles Eyre in the latter part of 1697 and early part of 1698 in St. John's Churchyard. Besides the Charnocks their eldest daughter Mary and her only infant brother share the mausoleum. The epitaph was penned by Rev. John Evans, the Chaplain. The Charnock mausoleum is a family tomb—the epitaph expresses the Christian hope in Charnock's name: "May the Lord remember the dead. Job Charnock has deposited the remains of his mortality beneath this marble, that they may rest in the hope of the blessed resurrection unto the coming of Christ, the judge". It is a massive structure octogonal in form, with a double dome, which claims to be the oldest piece of masonry in Calcutta.<sup>139</sup>

#### V. *Calcutta founded : August 24, 1690*

##### 1. *The theory of the Armenian Settlement*

This pivots round an inscription on a tomb in the Armenian churchyard of Calcutta bearing a date corresponding to July 11, 1630, which is anterior to Job Charnock's final landing on August 24, 1690. Mesroby J. Seth, the author of "The History of the Armenians in India" propounded this theory. It stressed three points. *First*, the Armenians settled for commerce in Sutanuti; *Second*, they "worshipped in a small chapel built of timber". *Third*, in 1630 was erected a tomb of one "Rezabeebath the wife of the late Charitable Sookeas".<sup>140</sup> Now, this theory—out the second point is not tenable, since in 1630 the "small chapel built of timber" was nowhere in existence. Its erection took place only when it was built by the East India Company in 1689 through the good offices of the Armenian Khoja Phanoos Kalendar. With regard to the first and third points, it may be stated that the Armenians traded with the people of India long before the British. As far back as 780 one Thomas Cana landed on the Malabar Coast. But to trade is one thing, and to acquire settlement is

138. Chaudhuri S.—Trade and Commercial organisation in Bengal 1500-1720 (1975), 248-58.

139. Nair—Job Charnock, 34-36.

140. Seth, M. J.—'The oldest Christian tomb in Calcutta' in *Bengal past and present*, Vol. 43 (Jan.-June, 1932, Ser. nos. 85-6), 27-3.

another. The Armenians came and went as traders, but they had no intention of founding a city.<sup>141</sup> Moreover, the transfer deed of the Zamindari made it clear that the lands in Sutanuti, Kalkatah and Govindpur were "free from adverse rights". And the "Charitable Sookeas" was none other than Bagaram Johanes Sukeas, who died on August 4, 1844.<sup>142</sup> No other Sukeas is known to the history of the Armenians in Calcutta. All these circumstances and evidence disprove the theory. It is thus clear that "Charnock and Charnock alone, founded Calcutta".

## 2. *No Kipling by command*

Rudyard Kipling stated in "A tale of two cities" thus :

Thus the midday halt of Charnock—more's the pity,  
Grew a city.  
As the fungus sprouts chaotic from its bed,  
So it spread—  
Chance-directed, chance-erected, laid and built  
On the silt—  
Palace, byre, hovel—poverty and pride—  
Side by side :  
And, above the packed and pestilential town,  
Death looked down.<sup>143</sup>

But Kipling's lines contain "a truth" and "a recognised fallacy", as asserted by Firminger.<sup>144</sup> The "truth" lies in this that they point out the city's "fungoid" growth, "pestilential" character, and "unplanned" development. This has an appeal to the reformers and is serviceable to them. For they may consider it "their duty to hasten schemes of improvement" as is now being done by the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation (CMPO). And the "recognised fallacy" lies in "the general theory of the lines" as expressed in "The White Man's burden" (1899) and "The Ballad of East and West" (1889). The idea is that "East is East, and West

141. Moreno, H. W. B.—Job Charnock, the founder of Calcutta and the Armenian Controversy : *Calcutta Review*, April, 1915, No 280 at 207-15.

142. Bengal obituary, 312.

143. Kipling, R.—Selected verse (Penguin, Reprint, 1984), : 'A tale of two cities', 26-7 (ed.), James Cochrane.

144. Firminger, W. K.—'Charnock's character' in *Bengal Past and Present* (1908), Vol. II, Part ii, 530-33.

is West and never the twain shall meet". And the white man's burden is—

To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
(His) new—caught, sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.

*Secondly.*—Kipling is tied to the idea of the "Empire", in which "England's isle makes silver pile" while Charnock's city "goes her way" to "secure sure income" to the mother-country. The poem "A tale of two cities" means this. Kipling's imagination advocates imperialism with drum and trumpet and calls upon England to "take up the white man's burden" by dominating all "lesser breeds without the law". He cannot get rid of it. Thus in 1889 he wrote letter no. XII while on a trip from India to England by way of the United States: "A hundred years hence India and America will be worth observing. At present the one is burned out and the other is only just stoking up".<sup>145</sup>

*Thirdly.*—There is the fallacy of "false analogy", which has been "applied to those cases of analogical inference", as observed by Fowler in *Inductive logic*. "In which there exists no ground for analogy". Here the city has been likened to a "fungus" by way of a simile. Now metaphors and similes are good devices, no doubt, to emphasise points of similarity, but they become useless as good arguments. Kipling confuses the essential with the inessential points of similarity between the two. For, a city is a human construction, whereas a fungus is nature's creation. Besides, the former is inanimate, but the latter is animate. And thus there is no proof by analogy.<sup>146</sup> There is also factual inaccuracy. Fungi are simply-organised plants made of cellular filaments known as *hyphae*, lacking chlorophyll. It is ignorance that makes them look 'Chaotic'.

*Finally.*—'Chance' is "something that happens unpredictably without discernable human intention or observable cause". There is no conscious purpose such as "erection" or "direction" involved in this. So the terms "chance-directed", "chance-erected"

145. Kipling, R.—*American Notes*. 194

146. Lotze, H.—*Logic*, Sec. 214.



involve contradictions in themselves, though 'chance' may be equated with 'chaos'. Now the proposition set up by Kipling may be put in terms of proportion. Let C = city, f = fungus, Cg = chance growth and Cs = chaotic spread. And the proposition becomes proportional: f is to C as Cs is to Cg. The adjective—couple (Cs + Cg) is predicated of the substantive—couple (f + c).<sup>147</sup> Here is a loose identity of relations in the substantive—couple, so the argument from analogy becomes inconclusive. In other words, the resemblance is based on false analogy and the adjective cannot be predicated of it. C is related to f by way of pseudo-resemblance: there is no fundamental relation between the two. Hence the predication about Calcutta seems untenable. Too much importance is given to "chance", which becomes disproportionate here.

(iii) *Post-Charnock phase*—Charnock was declared independent of the control of Madras so long as he was alive. After his life-time, Bengal was made subordinate to Fort St. George. The court of Directors wrote on January 22, 1692 to the Fort thus: "During Charnock's life, we intend to trust him with such uncontrollable power, but in case of his death, we intend Bengal shall return to its quondam subordinate to the Fort".<sup>148</sup>

### 1. *Charnock's successors*

Charnock's immediate successor to the Agency was Francis Ellis who was the former's trusted lieutenant during the worst days. But he was found by the Company's supervisor, Sir John Goldborough to be "too easy and weak to stand alone". He was therefore sent to Madras as a member of the Council in 1694 and Charles Eyre appointed Agent. Ellis delivered on January, 1694 to Eyre the Company's cash worth Rs. 22,748.3a. 8p. The Council met on Thursdays—it had four members, Charles Eyre, John Beard, Roger Braddyll, and Edward Cornell. The first "Master of Attendance" (Harbour Master) of Calcutta was appointed in 1694. Before this the Senior Pilot of the Hooghly Pilot Service looked after the shipping affairs. The Company

147. Johnson, W.E.—*Logic* (Part I), 1964 at 207; Joseph H. W. B.—*An Introduction to Logic* (Reprint, 1967), 534-38.

148. *Despatches from England 1686-1692*, para 35 at 189.

had instituted the Hooghly Pilot Service on 20 November, 1668.<sup>149</sup>

Bricks were procurable at 3 rupee per thousand. So it was decided on 15 January, 1694/95 to 'mend' the river bank with them. The first brick-house on Sutanuti was built in 1694.<sup>150</sup> A decision was also taken on March 11, 1694/95 to construct for factors and writers half a dozen chambers of "brick and mud" on the north side of the factory compound in which Eyre lived. Cutch buildings were finished before the rainy season, but "wash'd down" during the heavy rains and high winds that lashed Sutanuti on June 2, 3, and 4 in 1695.<sup>151</sup> Fires were frequent and Charnock's house was burnt on December 19, 1694. It may be noted that Sir John Goldborough was appointed the Supervisor who suggested certain reforms. Charnock did not set apart a suitable place for building a factory thereon. Goldborough thought "fit to order the enclosing a piece of ground with a mud wall whereon to build a factory when we have a *parwana* for it".<sup>152</sup> He died in Calcutta in November, 1693.

A temporary factory was constructed in 1694. For its enlargement the water-tank near the factory gate had to be filled up. To drain out water a trench was dug out around the factory. But this was silted up with the mud. And the ditch was ordered on March 18, 1695 to be deepened 2 or 3 cubits for the drainage. Eyre had some idea of planning and tried to give it a shape. The fortification of the fort was one of such ideas. He laid down his office on February 1st, 1699. Before this, the Calcutta zamindari, had been acquired. On March 6, 1693 Sutanuti was declared "the chief station in Bengal". The General letter of the Court to Bengal Agent ran thus: "Chuttanuttie being a place where our ships ride well and where we are in a great measure already settled, we have no thoughts of removing our Chief and Council from that place, having reason to believe that it may be as healthful as any other part of Bengal".<sup>153</sup>

149. Hedges's Diary II, 129-34; Wilson—Old Fort William I. Extract 15, at 15-6.

150. Wilson—Old Fort William I. Nos. 15 and 19 at 16-7.

151. Ibid. No. 19 at 17-9.

152. Hedges's Diary II, 94.

153. Wilson's Old Fort William I Nos. 18 and 19 at 18.

## 2. *Fortification and Zamindari acquisition*

### (a) *Fortification*

During 1695-96 a local rebellion led by Sobha Singh, a zamindar of Midnapore and Rahim Khan, the leader of the Orissa Afghans gave the foreign traders an opportunity for building fortifications. The Nawab's forces were unable to check the rebels, but with the help of the Dutch at Chinsurah he could ultimately control them. The rebellion was finally suppressed by the middle of 1698. The Nawab conceded the right of fortification to the Company in 1696. As a result three forts came up—Fort Gustavus at Chinsurah, Fort Orleans at Chandernagar and Fort William in Calcutta. The work of fortification was started by Eyre who left it to his successor Beard. The first Fort William was not built in a day nor yet in a year, neither was it the work of a single man. The fort begun in 1696 was completed in 1716 or 1717. The fort was an irregular tetragon. North—340 ft. long; South—485 ft; East and West—710 ft.<sup>154</sup>

### (b) *Acquisition of the Zamindari*

The company had been endeavouring "to form 2 or 3 towns adjacent to Chuttanuttee—the rent of which will amount to about 2000 or 2500 rupees—which is a means to increase revenue in town of Chuttanuttee".<sup>155</sup> Calcutta formed a *Khasmahal*, an estate in the private possession of the Moghul emperor. The villages of Sutanuti, Kalkatah, Govindpur and the adjacent lands such as Magura, Khaspur, Paikan, Anwarpur, Havelisahar and Hatibagan were part of the Khasmahal. The zamindari rights, i.e. collection of revenue from houses, markets, management of wastelands and the like were vested in the Savarna Raichaudhuris.<sup>156</sup> The English were squatters on the soil of Kalkatah from August 24, 1690 to November 9, 1698, when they got the *Bainama* from the Raichaudhuri family. The English succeeded in 1698 through the influence of their friend Zainuddin Khan, sometime Governor of Hooghly, and on pay-

154. *Ibid.*, Introduction, xxi.

155. *Ibid.*, No. 15 and 15: letter No. O.C. 5949 from Bengal to Court—Chuttanuttee December 14, 1694.

156. Mitra, S.C.—*The Land Law of Bengal* (T.L.L. 1895), 1898 at 32-6.

ment of Rs. 1600 to the Prince Farrukh-Siyar, son of Governor Azim-us-Shan, to secure letters patent from the Governor to purchase from the existing holders the right of renting the villages of Chuttanuttee, Calcutta and Govindpur. Under this authority, the English purchased from Ramchand Ray, Monohar and others the zamindaris for Rs. 1300.<sup>157</sup> The *bainama* dated November 9, 1698 is given in Appendix B.

### 3. *The century's sunset*

The 17th century came to a close with two more important events as shown below. As well-said by Tagore on the last day of the last century :

The last sun of the century sets amidst the blood-red clouds of the west and the whirlwind of hatred.

The naked passion of self-love of Nations, in its drunken delirium of greed,

Dances to the clasp of steel and the howling verses of vengeance.<sup>158</sup>

A few more events came up before the sundown as shown below :

#### (a) *A firm settlement made in Calcutta*

On February 22, 1699 a general letter went from Chuttanuttee (Bengal) to the Court thus : "We have gained the Prince's *Nishan* for a firm settlement in this place with the rent of 3 towns, which will be a revenue sufficient, to bear the charge of the garrison etc".<sup>159</sup>

#### (b) *Bengal declared a Presidency with Fort William*

It is interesting to note that the letter-books of the Factory Council in the India office down to 27 March, 1706 are dated from "Chuttanutty" and on and from June 8 from "Calcutta". However, it is not clear if Chuttanutty occurring in early Factory Records meant the original site of Hatkhola where Charnock had probably landed or the later Dalhousie Square (now

157. Ray, A. K.—Calcutta, 39.

158. Tagore, R. N.—Nationalism (1950). 133.

159. Wilson—Old Fort William I, No. 41 at 42 : O.C. No. 6.617 ; letter No. 10 at 44.

Benoy-Badal-Dinesh Bagh) where the Factory headquarters were built up.<sup>160</sup>

Within 7 months of Charnock's death the settlement was visited by Sir John Goldborough, "Commissary Generall and Admirall of the East India Fleet". He was the first to lay out the lines for a fort. After his death it was fenced in by a mud wall. This spot lay not in "Chuttanuttee", but in "Dhee Collecotta" (Dihi Calcutta). And this decision marked a two-fold shift. *First*, it indicated a shift in the Company's thinking. *Secondly*, it signified a shift of the centre of commercial activities from *Sutanuti* to *Dihi Kalikatah*, where the foundation of the fort was laid. The choice of *Dihi Kalikatah* was dictated by a double consideration. On the one hand, its grounds were comparatively higher; on the other, Bura Bazar stood in its vicinity and as such could easily supply the required provisions<sup>161</sup>.

160. Cotton, op. cit. Note 3 at 22.

161. Ray, N. R.—Calcutta, 18.

## CHAPTER III

### CALCUTTA GROWS TO A CAPITAL CITY

There is a saying which passes as a proverb in Western India : "Madhuji Sindhia made himself master of India by calling himself a patel". With even better reason it might be said that the East India Company created an Empire by calling itself Zamindar. The Company was not a private adventurer, but an incorporated society invested with certain sovereign powers by the Sovereign of Great Britain. Whatever concessions the Company's servants might acquire, their masters intended to keep by force of arms, if necessary. The English could show Mughal *sanads* and *farmans* to justify their occupation, but the Director, when they referred to lands granted in Zamindari tenure as 'territory' or as 'possessions', clearly intended to indicate that rights obtained by process of Mughal law, would, if necessary, be maintained by military force. If then it be true to state that the English occupation was effected by process of Mughal law, it is necessary to remember that, although no battles were fought to win territorial sovereignty either for the Company or the Crown, yet behind the diplomatic or legal settlement there was a *virtual* conquest of the country, i.e. a supersession of the native military power by the British military power.

— W. K. Firminger : Historical Introduction to the Bengal Portion of the 5th Report (1917), 17.

To describe the growth of the settlement it is necessary to get an idea of the functioning of the East India Company beforehand.

#### I. The new East India Company

On the last day of the year 1600 the East India Company was incorporated by the name of "the Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading into the East India". The number of subscribers was 217. The Governor was Thomas Smythe; and there were 24 'Committees', that is, Committee men. They were all nominated in the charter and afterwards to be annually elected. The aims of the Company were commercial and the ex-

clusive trade with India was granted for 15 years. The portion of the Company became better defined on 31 May, 1609 when James I granted a fresh charter making that of Elizabeth perpetual, subject, however, to the right of the Crown to determine it on three years' notice on proof of injury to the public. This was followed by a royal grant of 14 December, 1615. On 4 February, 1623 James I authorised the Company to grant commissions to their Presidents and chief officers for the punishment of offences committed by the Company's servants on land in India and on the high seas. But the Company suffered during the reign of Charles I who granted to Sir William Courteen and his associates a licence to trade with the East Indies in 1635. Charles II continued Cromwell's Charter on 3 April, 1661. The political authority of the Company was established by the Charter of 5 October, 1676. It marked the complete sovereignty of the Crown over Bombay, where money could be coined. In Madras a mint had already been established for the coinage of pagodas by the Company, but under the authority of the Company's Indian overlord. Authority was given by Charter of 9 August, 1683 on the analogy of the Dutch East Indies Company "to create an Empire in India"—the Company could declare and make peace and war with any of the heathen nations of Asia, Africa and America. The privileges granted by Charles II were renewed by James II on 12 April, 1686. The Charter accorded to the Company a general power within their forts to coin any species of money to be current within the Charter limits. An innovation was made in the decision to permit the company to extend constitutional government in its Indian territories by the establishment of a municipal constitution for Madras. This marks the development of the territorial character of the Company's rule in Madras and signals the Crown's readiness to accord the fullest power to the Company. Difficulties arose when the officers appointed to judicial office under the Charters of 1683 and 1686 claimed to be royal rather than Company's officers. Hence, the King authorised the Company on 11 December, 1687 to grant a Municipal Charter to Madras. This grant was bound up with the acquisition of Political sovereignty and the creation of sources of revenue based thereon.

The opponents of the Company in England inveighed against 'the unjust and wicked war with the Great Mogul'. Opposition

to the East India monopoly had been growing for many years. A reaction arose against the autocratic power of Sir Josia Child. And the fall of the Stuart dynasty was a serious blow to Child. In the words of Hunter : "The Revolution (1688) brought the Company face to face with Parliament".<sup>1</sup> The Company's enemies sided with the Whig Party in 1690 to pass a resolution in favour of a new Company. Sir Josia Child expended over £ 80,000 in bribery among Ministers and procured a new Charter for the old Company in 1693. There was an outburst of public anger. Parliament thus resolved in 1684 that "all the subjects of England have equal right to trade to the East Indies unless prohibited by Act of Parliament."<sup>2</sup> In 1695 an inquiry was held into the Company's corruption and found that £ 10,7000 had been expended between 1688 and 1694. The principle of rotation of office was made compulsory by a Charter of 28 September, 1694. In 1698 the members of the Dowgate Association raised a loan of £ 2,000,000 at 8% for Montagu, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and were incorporated under the name of the "General Society". To this Society was granted the exclusive trade to India, saving the rights of the old Company which could expire after 3 years' notice. Two Charters came. The first dated 3 September, 1698 incorporated the General Society as a regulated Company ; the second dated 5 September, 1698 incorporated most of the members of the Society as a joint-stock Company, "the English Company trading to the East Indies". The English Company was to have a monopoly of joint-stock trading subject until 29 September, 1701 to the concurrent right of the London Company, whose rights were to terminate on three years' notice.

However, the old Company had secured £ 31,5000 of the stock issued ; it was the largest single holder in the English Company and its position entrenched. In 1700 it procured an Act of Parliament (11 & 12 Will. III. C.4), which permitted the Company to continue until the repayment by the Government of the £ 2,000,000 loan. The rivalry between the two Companies continued both in India and England until they were finally amalgamated on 22 July 1702 by an Indenture Tripartite between

1. Hunter, W.—A History of British India. Vol. II, 275.

2. Journals of the House of Commons, Jan. 16, 1694.



the Companies and Queen Anne, which was ratified by the Godolphin award (1708). The old Company was to maintain its existence for 7 years, but thereafter to surrender its charter. Meanwhile the trade of the two Companies was to be carried on jointly in the name of the English Company by 24 managers, half selected by either Company, while the English Company was to be renamed "The United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies". This body was to operate under the terms of the Charter of 5 September, 1698. However, the Charter Act of 1833 gave the shorter name of the East India Company.<sup>3</sup> In 1704 the Rotation Government of the two Companies came into existence. There was a Council for United Trade—the Councils of old and new Companies went on as usual with each a President of its own. For the United Trade Council consisting of 4 members of the old and 4 members of the new Company, two senior members were to be Chairman each week by week. In 1704 the United Trade Council had as members: (1) Ralph Sheldon (in charge of books), (2) John Russell (warehouse-keeper), (3) George Radshaw (in general charge), and (4) Bowchar (Zamindar). Hedges and Sheldon were to become chairmen in alternate weeks.<sup>4</sup>

## II. The growth of the settlement

An "Instrument of Union" was signed in April, 1702. The old Company was asked to purchase £ 6,73,000 additional stock in the General Society so as to make its share equal to that of its rival. The houses, factories, and forts of the old Company in India were valued at £ 3,30,000, those of the new at £70,000 and the New Company called upon to pay £ 1,30,000 to the old. The old 24 committees were replaced by 24 managers—12 to be elected by each Company—who were to direct the trade from 1702. The factors of the two companies were to work together in unity<sup>5</sup>. As letter of the old Company breathes this spirit of

3. Keith, A. B. *A constitutional history of India (1600-1935)*—Reprint, 1961 at 1-16; Roberts, P. E.—*History of British India* (Reprint, 1958), 47-59.

4. *Diary and Consultation Book* (at Fort William, Jan. 1704): C. R. Wilson—*The early annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. I (1895), 227.

5. Roberts, P. E.—*History of British India* (Reprint, 1958), 58-9.

hope : "The present union having put a full stop to all late competitions and struggles, and the trade being settled on the firm basis of an Act of Parliament and a large stock, we have a hopeful prospect that the same will in due time become more flourishing than ever".<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, a good deal of friction remained and it took sometime before the exhortations of the home authorities 'to bury all that is past in silence and forgetfulness'<sup>7</sup> were really carried out.

The first Governor and President of Fort William Calcutta was Sir Charles Eyre—Job Charnock's son-in-law—who remained from 26 May 1700 to 7 January 1701. Then came John Beard (7 January 1701—7 July, 1705). A list of Governors, Presidents and Governors-General is given in Appendix C. In the very early days the Governor's house was situated within the Fort. As observed by Captain Hamilton in 1702 : "The Company has also a pretty good garden, that furnishes the Governor with herbage and fruits at table, and some fish-ponds to serve the kitchen with good carps, callops and mullet."<sup>8</sup> John Beard was confirmed as President of the Council of Bengal for the "United Company of Merchants Trading to the East Indies" in 1703 with 8 Commissioners to assist him in matters of investigation and control of matters in the Presidency of Fort William. However, the amalgamation of the two rival companies and their dissensions were then not fully concluded. This was seen in the disastrous result of the unfortunate mission of Sir W. Norris, Ambassador from the English court to the Emperor Aurangzeb. And the latter ordered the imprisonment of all the Europeans within his dominions. The English settlements at Patna and Rajmahal were plundered and Calcutta threatened by the Foujdar of Hooghly. But Beard had fortified the place and thus showed a bold front. As a result Calcutta could escape being ransacked.

#### (a) *The Company's legal position*

On 17 June 1689 President Yule of St. George wrote to Nawab Bahadur Khan of Bengal that the Company wanted only "enjoy-

6. India Office Records—Letter Book No. 10. Dispatch to Bombay. July 26, 1702.
7. Ibid, Dispatch to Madras, March 5, 1702.
8. Hamilton, A.—A new Account of the East Indies (1727), Vols. II, XXIII, 7

ment of former privileges in a secure *settlement*" and would return "to the comfort and prosperity of your government as soon as you (Nawab) grant and procure for us (a secure *settlement*)".<sup>9</sup> In 1697 the word 'settlement' came to mean "a community of the subjects of a State settled in a new country ; a tract of country so settled, a colony, especially, one in its earlier stages".<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that this term occurs in the *Consultations at Chuttanuttee* dated 31 October, 1698 : "The Prince (has) given us the three towns adjacent to our Settlement, viz., *De Calcutta*, *Chuttanuttee* and *Govindpur*." It may be noted that in 1687 the English were *squatters* on the soil under the sufferance of the Savarna Jagirdar. They did not stand on the same footing as the Setts and Bysacks or other native or European residents such as the Dutch, the Portuguese and the Armenians. The latter settled with the knowledge and consent of the local landlord and paid him rent. The English squatted and paid no rent during their first or second occupation of Chuttanuttee. In 1690 they returned to Chuttanuttee in the same capacity and founded their factory.

During 1690-1695 the Company's legal position was that of a mere tenant-at-will who was liable to pay rent to the land-holder for the ground occupied by them and to ejectment in case of default. In 1696 the Nawab's tacit consent to the Company to build a fort in Calcutta gave them the right and status of a *maurasi* or occupancy right, since none in those days could make a masonry building without such a right. It appears they purchased some land from Basanta Roy, Raja Roy and others. However, it is not clear what rights this purchase conferred on them. But the *Bainama* in 1698 raised them to the position of a dependent talukdar, liable to pay rent to the jagirdar. This transferred the rights to the tenant's rents, while the jagir itself of the *Khalsa* was non-saleable. The Company was thus ordered to pay, not as *revenue* to the Imperial Exchequer but as *rent* of the jagir, the following amount for three villages :

			Rs.	As	P
Dihi—Calcutta	..	..	468	9	9
Sutalooti	..	..	501	15	6
Govindapur in Pargana					
Paikan	..	..	123	15	3
Govindapur in Pargana					
Kalkatah	..	..	100	5	11
Total	..	..	1,194	14	11

The rental for Govindapur in Pargana Paikan was soon raised to Rs. 210-9-0 from Rs. 123-15-3 and the sum payable by the Company to the Prince's jagirdar, amounted to Rs. 1,281-14-0. It was to be paid three times a year—on the 1st of April, August and December. Henceforth, the Company could settle tenants, grant them patta, collect rent, allow houses to be built, charge registration fee and fine their tenants and servants. In 1704 they took back the pattas of the old land-holders and granted new pattas, in which were written only the area and the rent of the holding. They levied a premium on those who could produce no writings for their tenements. Since 1695 before the receipt of the Prince's *firman* they had realised Rs. 75-0-6 and upwards from shop rents, fines, fees, and duties. And these have been styled euphemistically "revenue". The term 'dihi' or 'dechi' prefixed to Calcutta is Persian 'deh' meaning 'village' or 'township'—a common term used in the Indian Revenue Administration. And 'dech' means the limits of any village. Hence, '*Deeh* or dihi Calcutta' means 'only that part which was originally inhabited.'

(b) *Farrukhsiyar's firman of December 30, 1716*

The people of Calcutta spoke of themselves as 'The inhabitants' and the town as 'The Settlement'. A young lady writing to a friend said: "They call this place 'The Settlement', but really, I have never been so unsettled in all my life".<sup>11</sup> This "unsettled"

11. Ray, A. K.—Calcutta (Reprint, 1982), 48, 55-6

12. Yule, H./Burnell, A. C.—Hobson-Jobson (1986), 980: Long-Selections from unpublished Records of Govt for 1748-69, 176.

13. Hobbs, H.—Impressions of old Calcutta. Introducing India. Part II. (R.A.S.B.), 1949 at 48.

position was due to the facts of the anarchical conditions of Bengal. In the words of Firminger: "In its origin the Mughal government of Bengal was a military occupation in which the Subahdar tended to make himself independent of the Emperor, while the Faujdars would do their best to be independent of the Subahdar".<sup>14</sup> The English had been suffering from harassment and exactions at the hands of the Moghul officials. "They sought to obtain concessions which once granted would not be subject to be worked at the Emperor's pleasure: they were obsessed by the (idea) that a *firman* from the Emperor would be as binding and efficacious as was their own charter from the English Crown".<sup>15</sup> They had fortified settlement in Fort William and considered that they needed some adjacent territory from which they might draw sufficient revenue for the upkeep of their fortress. Hence, the then Governor, Robert Hedges obtained permission from the Court in 1713 to despatch an Embassy to Delhi to represent their grievances to Emperor, Farrukhsiyar. He chose two ablest factors—John Surman and Edward Stephenson—as members of the Embassy and attached to it an Armenian merchant, Khoja Serhand as Interpreter and William Hamilton as Surgeon. Dr. Hamilton came to India as a surgeon by the frigate "*Sharborne*" in 1710. Hugh Barker was the Secretary of the Embassy led by Surman. It started in 1715 with costly presents worth about £ 30,000 and was warmly received at Delhi on 8 July, 1715. Farrukhsiyar had been suffering from swellings in the groin and put himself in Hamilton's hands. He was cured of the malady. This helped the Emperor marry on 27th or 28th September, Ajit Singh's daughter, a Rajput princess of Jodhpur after her conversion to the Moslem faith.<sup>16</sup> This created a favourable atmosphere. After a good deal of formalities and delayed proceedings of the Moghul Government, the imperial assent to the Company's petition was obtained on December 30, 1716.

The Persian version of the *firman* and its translation in English

14. Firminger, W. K.—Historical Introduction to the Bengal portion of the Fifth Report (Reprint, 1962).

15. Ibid, 66.

16. Irvine's *Later Moghuls*, Chap. IV, 17 in J.A.S.B. vol. LXX II, Part I, p. 61: C.R. Wilson's *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, vol. II, Part II, at XLiii, note 1 at 94.

in respect of Bengal appear side by side in Surman's Diary.<sup>17</sup> The Firman of December 30, 1716 is given in Appendix III. It confirmed the Company in the purchase of the three villages mentioned already and permitted them to purchase 38 more towns adjoining them as shown in Appendix D. The main provisions of the Firman are noted below :

1. The duty-free trade was to continue on an annual payment of a *pescash* (quit-rent) or tribute of Rs. 3,000 to the Royal Exchequer at Hooghly.

2. The rentings of Calcutta, Sutanati and Govindpur in the pargana of Amirabad are confirmed for an annual payment of Rs. 1,125-6-0 and those of 38 new villages adjoining the aforesaid towns conferred for an annual rent of Rs. 8,121-8-0 to be paid to the Moghul Government. These villages are to be bought from the respective owners with the permission of the Dewan Subah.

3. In case the goods belonging to the English are stolen, attempt should be made to find out and return the same to the owners and the thief should be punished.

4. The Madras rupees, provided they are as good as those coined at Surat, should pass in Bengal without discount.

5. The original sanads need not be demanded of and shown by the English. A copy under the Kazi's seal would be sufficient substitute for the original.

6. All persons, whether European or native, indebted to the Company should be delivered to the chief of the factor.

7. The English ships wrecked or driven ashore by storms should not be seized by the officers of the Government, but every assistance rendered to the English (Home Miscellaneous vol. 69, pp. 130-31).

Besides, some more privileges were granted to the English by the *hash-ul-hukm* or imperial commands noted on the back of the firman. More important ones are shown below :

(a) A *dastak* or permit given by the chief of the factory should exempt the goods from being stopped or examined by the Government officials.

(b) The Bengal Government should afford facility for the coining of the Company's gold and silver in the mint at Murshi-

17. India Office Records, London : Home Miscellaneous, Vols. 69-71.

dabad in the season of coining other merchant's money, if not against the king's interest (Home Miscellaneous series, vol. 630, Nos. 1 and 12).

The firman had been hailed as the Magna Carta of the Company's trade in Bengal and India. *First*, it recognised all the privileges obtained and enjoyed by the Company since the reign of Shah Jahan. *Second*, it contained new provisions: "That all goods and necessities which factors of Subahships, ports and round about, bring or carry away either by land or water, know they are custom-free that they may buy and or sell at their pleasure (Home Miscellaneous Vol. 630, Nos. 1 and 12). No other merchants—Indian or non-Indian—had these privileges. *Third*, it almost gave the Company *extra-territorial* rights. *Finally*, the *firman* opened the road for the establishment of the commercial and political supremacy of the Company in India. Thus in 1757 Robert Clive wanted to justify his march against Siraj-ud-daulah in terms of this firman.<sup>18</sup>

It is said that there was "the ban of the gubernatorial authorities for more than 20 years" on the sale of Zamindari to the Company.<sup>19</sup> But this is incorrect. There was no Bengal Government order prohibiting this sale. However, Murshid Quli Khan's dislike of the sale of Zamindaries to the East India Company was so well-known that no zamindar dared sell his Zamindari to them. Indirect discouragement was enough. However, the Company adopted a subterfuge. They purchased some neighbouring villages in the names of their native servants. The Nawab's government was aware of this. The revenue belonged to the King, but the land to the Zamindar. So a Zamindar could sell or mortgage his property. But according to the Qanungoes the sanction of government was proper and requisite. The theory is best expressed in the Farrukhsiyar firman in regard to the purchase of 38 villages: *az malikan kherid nemayend Dewanyam Subah wagozarend*, i.e., let them purchase from the owners and let the Dewan release it.<sup>20</sup> In other words, approval

18. Long, J.—Selections from unpublished Records of Government (1748-67), Reprint, 1973: Mahadev Prosad Saha's (ed.) Glossary Notes, App. V, 56-8.

19. Ray, op. cit 48.

20. Rous. B—Dissertation, 101: photostat copy of the *firman*.

was to be given after the completion of the purchase transaction. There was thus no defiance by the Nawab of the Imperial order. There was enough discretion left with the Bengal Government. The theory of so-called Nawabi intransigence is based on a misinterpretation of the language of the *firman*. Naturally it is wrongly said that the battle of Plassey was fought to regain the rights granted by the *firman* and *hash-ul-hukm* denied by the Nawabs of Bengal.

The concessions accorded by the *firman*, however, proved nugatory because whatever the Moghul might choose to order, his Viceroy (Nawab) at Murshidabad would not allow the Company to realise their rights. Murshid Quli Khan was appointed the Subahdar in 1717 and he continued as such till his death in 1727. He resisted the English claim to minting coins and to added territories. Naturally fictions arose and the English had to remain content with the Subahdar's interpretation of the *firman*. Murshid Khan's revenue settlement (*Asl Jama Tumari*) of 1722 was important. Where the property in the soil had been sold by the Company at Rs. 3 per bigha—which the purchaser was still liable to pay for ground rent—must be considered as the revenue paid to Government by the proprietor of the land so purchased. So the formal grant obtained by the Company was in the nature of a talukdari or copy-hold tenure, as observed by Hunter.

### (c) Calcutta's progress

The inhabitants "lived in a wild, unsettled condition at Chuttanuttee, neither fortified houses, nor godowns, only tents, huts and boats".<sup>45</sup> The Agent Charles Eyre's *cutch* house caught fire and was promptly built of brick. A severe storm blew down many of the "lodging rooms" of the servants of John Company. Because of Sova Singh's rebellion the Nawab accorded permission to the English "to defend themselves". As early as 1693 Sir John Goldsborough had selected a site for a factory and enclosed it with a mud wall. The present Strand Road was then



a part of the river bed of the Hooghly. The actual site is now occupied by the General Post Office, the Customs House and East India Railway House. Fortifications were hurriedly run up and continued even after Sova Singh's withdrawal. By January 1697, a bastion and a walled enclosure were completed and 10 guns were ordered from Madras. It was a square tower with thick walls and it looked "like a warehouse for fear of exciting the jealousy of the Moghul". But when Sir Charles Eyre became the first President in 1700 he got instructions to build a fort to be named after William III. In 1702 the President's house was commenced and the Union Jack hoisted for the first time in the settlement on October 6 in the same year. It took four years to complete the President's house. It has been described by Captain Hamilton as "the best and most regular piece of architecture in India".<sup>24</sup> Portuguese was used as the common language of intercourse in 1708 amongst the Europeans. English incorporated a few words such as 'caste', 'compound' etc., and Bengali such words as 'kamra', 'Padri' and the like.

In 1706 the old factory house was pulled down and a new one-storied house erected in its place for the servants of the Company—the first "Writers' Buildings". In the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 the English got an opportunity to fortify further their settlement. In the midst of general insecurity they built up two more bastions on the river side. Other European merchants also had built their houses on the eastern side of the fort, because the western side was lapped by the Hooghly. The pivot of the settlement was "The Green before the Fort", called '*Lal Dighi*' by the Indians, 'Dalhousie Square' by the Europeans and now 'Bibadi (Benoy-Badal-Dinesh) Bag'. It was a dirty pond full of weeds but in 1709 deepened to provide a reservoir of water. The fish-pond was in the centre of the Park and they were subsequently converted into the "Great Tank". During this year the Church of St. Anne was erected partly by State grant and partly by public subscription. In 1710 a wharf was commenced before the fort, faced with brick and with a breast work for cannon.

The administration was carried on by a Council which met at 9 O'Clock in the morning at the commencement of each week.

24. Hamilton, op. cit., Vol. II, Chap. xxiii, 7.

The members were "dressed in muslin shirts, pyjamas and starched white caps, sitting in the consultation room with a case of bottle of good old arrack and a goblet of water on the table, which the Secretary with skilful hand converted into punch when the occasion arose".<sup>25</sup> The Council had a President with a salary of £ 100 a year in common with the Chaplain. There were 8 other members "passing rich with 40 pounds a year". The exchange rate was fixed at 2s. 6d. i.e. Rs. 8 a pound. They all had responsible duties. The 2nd and 4th members were the Chiefs of Cossimbazar and Dacca factories; the 3rd was the Accountant; the 5th and the 6th, the Export and Import warehouse keepers; the 7th the Paymaster; the 8th, the Collector, or to give him his own name, the Zamindar; the 9th and the last member was the Secretary. The 'Zamindar' was a collector of revenue as well as a judicial officer—it was part of his duty to "make roads and repair drains". The office of Zamindar of Calcutta was created in 1720 when Govinda Ram Mitra, known as the "Black Zamindar" was appointed Dewan or head Ministerial officer to the Zamindar. The Zamindar was not a landholder, but a judicial\*functionary, who had the entire control of the "municipal, fiscal, civil and criminal affairs of the town as far as the Natives were concerned". In criminal matters he could summarily fine, flog and imprison the accused. And appeals lay to the President only in capital cases, when the lash could be inflicted till death.

(d) *The Company becomes Zamindar*

To meet the annual dues the Company was privileged to collect a maximum of three rupees per bigha for land held by the inhabitants. In 1704 the average monthly balance to the Company's credit amounted to Rs. 480—in Holwell's time it amounted to about Rs. 3,800, when more lands were included in the Company's holding. The English by their transactions with Azim-ush-Shan obtained three rights, namely, (i) to collect the rents from the ryots; (ii) to deal at pleasure with the waste lands; and (iii) to impose petty taxes, 'uties, and fines. Whether the English had become Zamindars or talukdars is a technical question of no historical importance. For the Company at once

25. Indian Gazette dt. Feb. 24, 1781: an old country captain's report.

regarded itself a Zamindar and functioned as such. To meet their extra responsibilities they appointed an additional member of the Council and called him the "zamindar" or collector. In accordance with the zamindari customs, the English zamindar of the three towns acted as a Magistrate of the police and held courts in which petty offences and cases of revenue disputes were decided.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting to note that the court's letter dated March 3, 1758, in para 98 has stated that "English officers deciding disputes between natives (must) be called zamindars"; "The Civil Authority, for determining all causes of property between the Natives above 20 rupees, are to be vested in 5 persons. The members are to (be) from our servants below Council, one of which is to preside as judge for a year only, and then another is to be elected. These several appointments are to be made by our President and Council, who are to remove them when the service requires it".<sup>27</sup>

The word, 'zamindar' is derived from Persian 'zamindar' meaning 'landholder' (zamin = land ; dar — holder). That is to say, it means one holding land on which he pays revenue to the Government direct and not to any intermediate superior.<sup>28</sup> The word originated in India in 1683. Thus Hedges's Diary dated April 11, 1683 states : "We lay at Bogachera, the *gemindar* has invited us ashore". Next the word 'zemindary' derived from *zemindar* came into use in 1757. It means 'the system of holding lands and farming of revenue by means of zemindars ; the office or jurisdiction of a zemindar'. There is also a second meaning, namely, 'the office or jurisdiction of a zemindar'. In 1764 *zemindary* came to mean 'the territory administered by a zemindar'.<sup>29</sup> In this context, Holwell a former Collector of Calcutta (1752-56) defines 'zemindar' thus : "The *zemindar* acts in a double capacity, distinct and independent of each other—the one as superintendent and collector of revenues ; the other as judge of the court of cutchery, a tribunal constituted for the *hearing*, trying and determining all matters and things, both civil

and criminal, wherein the natives only, subjects of the Moghul, are concerned. He tried in a summary way, had the power of the lash, fine, and imprisonment: he determined all matters of meum and tuum and in all criminal cases proceeded to sentence and punishment immediately after hearing, except where the crime (or murder) requires the lash to be inflicted until death, in which case he suspends execution of the sentence until the facts as evidence are laid before the President, and his confirmation of the sentence is obtained. He has also the power to condemn thieves, and other culprits to work in chains upon the roads, during any determinate space of time, or for life. In all cases of property, an appeal lay to the President and Council against his decree".<sup>30</sup>

### (c) *Area and Population*

In the earlier years of British occupation the word 'town' was applied to the component mouzas of the settlement and its environs. But only a small area round the park and the factory could claim this appellation. The only conspicuous masonry building Charnock acquired was the Cutchery of the jagirdar, with the construction of the front and the reclamation of the tank, the Portuguese and Armenian inhabitants as well as the Dutch and Danes clustered round the factory. The Burrabazar, called the Great Bazar had every available space within its boundaries occupied by the houses and shops of native traders. In 1706 only 248 bighas of land were occupied with dwellings in Town Calcutta and 364 bighas remained to be utilised for houses. However, the Great Bazar to its immediate north was already most populous, for it had 400 bighas built over out of the total of 488 bighas. Surrounding the small town lay 1,470 bighas of land in "Dhee Calcutta", partly cultivated and partly waste. On the north of this *dihī* lay Sutanati containing 134 bighas of inhabited land and 1,558 bighas of jungle and cultivated land. To the south of the *dihī* stood Govindpur high on the river bank with 57 bighas of inhabited land out of the total of 1,178 bighas, most of which was jungle land. Thus Azim-us-Shan's grant of the 1698 sanad covered 840 bighas of inhabited

30. India Tracts by Mr. Holwell and friends (2nd edn., London, 1764), 120.

land out of a total of 5,077 bighas or 1,861 acres. It was about 3 miles in length and about a mile in breadth. This area increased with the purchase in 1717 by the Company of 38 villages with the Emperor's permission. By the end of the 17th century the area was 1,692 acres, of which 216 were urban and 1,476 suburban.

In early days it was the practice to talk of any village having a *hat* or *mart* as a 'town'. The Surman Embassy asked for the zamindaries of "38 towns". But these so-called towns were no better than ordinary riparian villages. However, from the earliest days Sutanuti, Govindpur and Calcutta had been called "towns", though they were but petty villages in Charnock's time. There is again difference of opinion as to the significance of the term 'population'. To some it meant the normal resident population : to others it meant normal and floating population. Hence, the estimates of population in the English Settlement varied as shown below :

	1696	1704	• 1708	1710
Wilson	—	15,000	31,000	41,000
Hamilton	—	—	—	12,000
Holwell	8,073	51,000	1,08,700	1,47,000

(Projected from his figures for 1752 by the rule of proportion).

The town revenues recorded an increase as follows :

	Ground rent	Other rates and taxes	Total
1694	Rs. 300	Rs. 600	Rs. 900
1698	Rs. 480	Rs. 960	Rs. 1,440
1704	Rs. 1,920	Rs. 3,840	Rs. 5,760
1710	Rs. 5,480	Rs. 10,960	Rs. 16,440

The following table shows the town area, the number of houses, roads and tanks :

Year	Acreage		Total	Houses		Roads			
	Urban	Rural		Pucka	Kutchra	Str- cets	Lanes	By- Lanes	Total
1706	216	1,476	1,692	8	8,000	2	2	—	17
1726	332	2,018	2,350	40	13,300	4	8	—	27

The break-down of population by religion in 1710 is as follows :

Hindus	..	8,000	Mussalmans	..	2,150 ;
Europeans	..	250 ;	Eurasians	..	1,500 ;
Armenians	..	100 ;			

### III. From Mayor's Court to Plassey

#### (a) *The Mayor's Court*

During the period of settlement the position of the English was that it was obtained with the leave of the Native Government. The settlements were founded and factories fortified with the permission of the Government and held under it by the Company as subjects owing obedience as tenants rendering rent and as officers exercising a part of the authority of the Government by delegation.<sup>31</sup> Since they could not be governed by the law of the Koran, they remained subject to their own law and were obliged to take steps for introducing it. In this the factories and settlements appeared to be parts of English territory. Hence, a foreigner residing in them and carrying on trade was held to take his temporary national character, not from the Moghul dominion, to which they were subject, but from the British possessions.<sup>32</sup> In this context it became necessary that the Crown should grant to the Company some legislative and judicial authority to be exercised in the East Indian possessions over English servants and such native settlers who placed themselves under their protection. It may be noted that prior to 1727 the judicial system at Calcutta was based on the Company's authority as a zemindar. While after

31. Ray, *op. cit.*, 96-7, 125, 127-30, 138, 143.

32. *Mayor of Lyons, V. East India Co.* 1 MIA. 272.

33. *The Indian Chief*, 3, Rob. Adm. Rep. 29, per Lord Stowell.

1727 it derived its authority from the charter issued to the Company by King George I on September 24, 1726 (13th Geo. I). The then existing courts were superseded and the Crown by Letters Patent established a Mayor's Court at Fort William with a Mayor and 9 Aldermen, 7 of whom with the Mayor were required to be natural-born British subjects. It was declared to be a Court of record and empowered to try, hear and determine all civil suits, actions and pleas between party and party. The quorum of the court was 3—the Mayor or senior Alderman together with 2 other Aldermen. The first appeal from the court lay, within 14 days, to the Governor and Council, whence a further appeal could be lodged, within 14 days, with the King-in-Council in matters involving 1,000 pagodas or more. The Mayor's Court had jurisdiction to grant probates of wills and letters of administration.

The criminal jurisdiction was vested in the Governor and five senior members of the Council. Each of them was individually to be a justice of the peace and to act as such. He could arrest persons accused of committing crimes, punish the guilty of minor crimes, and commit the rest to the quarter sessions for trial. Three justices of the peace formed a court of record and had powers of the court of Oyer and Terminer and gaol delivery and thus held quarter sessions 4 times a year. Trials were held with the help of grand jury and petty jury. Offences of high treason were kept out of such trials. Besides, the Charter of 1726 empowered the Governor and Council of the Presidency town to make by-laws, rules and ordinances for the "good government and regulation of the corporation and the inhabitants of the settlement. And they must be "agreeable to reason, not contrary to the laws and statutes of England".

The Charter of 1726 was replaced by that of 1753 (26 Geo. II)—the latter was a modified version of the former. *First*, it put an end to the dissensions and disaffection between the Mayor's Court and the Government by making the Mayor and the Aldermen the nominees of the Government. *Second*, the court could not entertain a suit and action between the natives until both parties submitted to it for the Court's determination. *Third*, the administration was made impartial and effective by providing for action even against the Mayor. *Finally*, a new court—the court of Requests—came into being, to decide summarily the cases

upto 5 pagodas. Thus there were the following courts—court of Requests ; Mayor's court of Civil jurisdiction ; court of the Governor and Council to hear appeals from the Mayor's Court ; Justices of the Peace ; and the Court Quarter Sessions to decide criminal cases. The Privy Council became the ultimate court of appeal in civil cases.<sup>34</sup>

(b) *The Great Calamity and the Mahratta Ditch*

The shipping of the Calcutta port amounted to 10,000 tons in 1727. The first charity school was established in this year by Bouchier who afterwards became the Governor of Bombay. In 1734 it was made over to the Company on the condition that they would defray an expenditure of Rs. 4,000 annually for its support. This was the foundation of the Free School.

On September 30, 1737 occurred the terrible cyclone and earthquake which almost devastated Calcutta. This halted the progress of Calcutta. 15 inches of rain fell in 5 hours and this together with the violent earthquake threw down most of the buildings including the Church of St. Anne. The *Gentleman's Magazine* (1738-9) described the Great Calamity falling on Calcutta : it consisted of the cyclone, rain and earthquake. A furious hurricane at the mouth of the Ganges reached 60 leagues up the river. It was accompanied by a violent earthquake and rainfall. 200 houses were thrown down including the steeple of St. John's Church. 20,000 ships, barks, sloops, boats, canoes etc. were cut away. 3,00,000 souls are said to have been lost. The water rose 40 ft. higher than usual in the Hooghly. Another victim was the nine-jewelled temple on the Chitpore Road, the loftiest pinnacle of which was higher than the Ochterlony Monument built by Gobinda Ram Mitra, the Deputy of the Zemindar (1720-51).

The Calcutta settlement grew and prospered while the Moghul Empire at Delhi, was waning fast. Successive Nawabs of Bengal kept up a nominal allegiance to Delhi, but grew more independent and despotic in their rule. Alivardi Khan was placed on the

34. Cowell, H.—The history and Constitution of the Courts and legislative authorities in India (T.L.L. 1872), 5th edn. (1905), 13-5 ; M. P. Jain—Outlines of Indian legal History (4th edn. 1981), 35-7, 39, 44-6.

35. Blychenden, K.—Calcutta : past and present (Reprint, 1978), 20-1, Note 22 at 27.



*gadi* as the Nawab of Bengal in 1740. During this period of lawlessness the Mahratta horsemen of Central India began to invade Orissa and Bengal and to lay waste whole tracts of the country. Terror and consternation spread through the land and flights of the inhabitants of the other side of the Hooghly to Calcutta became so numerous that in 1742 the Indian residents of the Settlement requested the authorities and got permission to dig a Ditch at their own expense round the Company's lands from the northern part of Sutanuti to the southern part of Govindpore. The work was to extend 7 miles, while the then force did not exceed 300 Europeans and 500 sepoys. In 6 months 3 miles were finished and the inhabitants saw that no Mahrattas had ever been on the western side of the river within 60 miles of Calcutta. Hence, they discontinued their work, which thereafter came to be known as the 'Mahratta Ditch' and the inhabitants 'ditchers'. Calcutta in 1742 is shown in App. F. there arose a saying : 'He has never gone beyond the Ditch'. It meant that 'he has never left Calcutta'. As a means of defence, the Ditch was worthless\* and it was not used by the English during the attack of Sirajud-daulah in June 1756. So in 1799 it was filled up and the Circular Road made."

An alarm was raised in February, 1748 by the Mahrattas and a public consultation held in Calcutta. It was presided over by John Forster, the President and attended by 5 other members of the Council. Omichand, the Bengali millionaire acted as the medium of communication between the English and the Mahrattas. The English paid the Foujdar of Hooghly Rs. 2,750 per annum for his good will and an Anglo-Dutch alliance formed against the French.

(c) *Town Calcutta in the fifties.*

(i) *Area, population, revenue*—There was a steady growth in the European population of Calcutta. Besides the English company's servants and soldiers, there were merchants as well. And the White Town of Calcutta had 15,000 in 1704 and 1,04,860 in 1752. Of course Holwell gives 4,09,000. This figure has been adjusted by A. K. Ray<sup>37</sup> to 1,17,744 souls distributed over 18,891

36. Ibid, 28-9 ; H. Blochmann—"Calcutta during last century" in *Calcutta keepsake* (1978) (ed.), Alok Roy, 67.

37. Ray, op. cit., 131-133, 125-6, 138.

bighas or 6,297 acres. Holwell's figures relating to areas and houses are given below. This gives an average of 18.5 persons to the acre.

I. Names of places	Bigha	Cottah	No. of houses
Dee Calcutta	.. 1,704	3	3,422
Sootanutty	.. 1,861	5½	2,374
Govindpur	.. 1,044	13½	1,753
Bazar Calcutta	.. 560	2½	989
John Nagore	.. 228	1½	606
Bagh Bazar	.. 57	17½	173
Lall Bazar	.. 10	9	81
Santose Bazar	.. 5	8½	53
<hr/>			
Total :	.. 5,472	0½	9,451

(On pattas which paid  
a ground rent of Rs. 3  
per bigha)

## II. Areas occupied by—

Company	.. 310	5½
Donations	.. 16	11
Churches	.. 7	19
Moor's Mosques	.. 15	7½
Gentoo idols	.. 13	13
Brahmans	.. 242	0
Gentoos poor	.. 14	12
Moors poor	.. 30	15
Tanks	.. 62	18½
Indulgences	.. 18	10½

Total : .. 733 (which paid no  
ground rent)

Grand total of the Company's ground .. 6,205 bighas and  
½ cottah.

## III. Private proprietor's lands—

Simlee	..	1,000
Molunga	..	800
Mirzapur	..	1,000
Hogulkuria	..	250

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Total : .. 3,050 bighas containing 5,267 houses.

Thus the grand total of land and houses in the Settlement comes to 9,225 bighas and 14,718 houses respectively. And the breakdown is as follows :

Year	Town areas in acreage			Houses		Roads			
	Urban	Rural	Total	Pucka	Kutchra	Streets	Lanes	By-Lanes	Tanks
1742	448	2,781	3,229	121	14,747	16	46	74	27
1756	704	2,525	3,229	498	14,450	27	52	74	13

The revenues of the town were as follows :

Year	Ground rent (Rs.)	Rates and taxes (Rs.)	Total (Rs.)
1752	16,316	30,254	46,440
1757	17,020	90,101	1,07,131

(ii) *Administration*—For administrative purposes the three Towns were divided into four divisions : (1) the Great Bazar ; (2) Town Calcutta ; (3) Sutanuti ; (4) Govindpur. Under the Collector or Zemindar of Calcutta there was a native official known as “the black collector”. By immemorial practice he was to supplement his inadequate salary by what he considered, according to native traditions, the perquisites of his office, emoluments, which on scrutiny, would be regarded by his employees as embezzlements. Holwell, the then Collector, took effective steps to bring Govindram Mitra to book for heavy frauds. The latter was dismissed by Holwell, but reinstated by the majority of the Council. However, he was made to refund Rs. 3,397 embezzled by him. It appears that the post of “the black zemindar” had been continuing since April 4, 1709. He was to take care of bazars

and the three towns. The post lay vacant for several months during which one Nandaram Sen officiated. He was the first Bengali to be appointed by the English to such a post. Rambuddar was then appointed and Santose Mullick stood surety for him. Nandaram was fined Rs. 3,000 for wronging the Company's tenants. Jagat Das was the zemindar's assistant and he was found guilty on March 5, 1711.<sup>38</sup> The black zemindar was the Dewan or head ministerial officer to the zemindar. The bazars in Calcutta were Soba, Dobapara, Hautcola, Baugh, Charles, Sam New, Bagan, Ghasthola, John Nagore. The price of bricks was Rs. 3.8 per thousand and laskar's wages Rs. 4 to 6 per man.

The court of Kutchery was composed of the Company's servants under Council, any three of them, their President being one. This was organised in 1704—it met in some convenient place between 9 and 12 in the morning, every Saturday to hear and determine all controversies between the native inhabitants of Calcutta.<sup>39</sup>

(iii) *Company's factories*—The factories differed in size from a complement of less than a dozen to one or two or fifty or more staff. The men lived over a hall beneath, women were not allowed to go abroad till the end of the 17th century. Then the employees rented or bought houses in the town. The 5-year contracts of employment yielded to longer engagements. This was a prelude to a lifetime's career in the service of the E.I.C. The hierarchy was as follows :

Writer → Factor → Junior Merchant → Senior Merchant (or Chief Agent) → Councillor → President and Governor. In addition, there were Chaplains, Surgeons and Mesters. The writers were required to attend only from 9 to 12 in the morning and enjoined not to ramble in palanquins. Their lodgings were located in the northern side of the Fort and shut out from the south by the warehouse standing in the centre. They were damp.

Whenever ships of unknown origin arrived in the Bay of Bengal, the English issued notices in Calcutta in various languages.

38. Diary and Consultation Book at Fort William, Secs. 306, 457, 461, 463 : C. R. Wilson's *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol I (1895).

39. Firminger, *op. cit.*, 84-5.

"in English, Portuguese, Persians, Armenians, Nagarees and Bengali", asking people not to have any dealings with them.<sup>40</sup>

(iv) *White, Black, and Brown Towns*.—The popular name of the native city of Madras is called the "Black Town" as distinguished from the Port and southern suburbs occupied by the English residents, and the bazars which supply their wants. The town is also used at Bombay. Hamilton used the expression in 1727 in his book—'A new account of the East Indies', Vol. I at page 367—thus : "*The Black Town* (of Madras) is inhabited by Gentoos, Mahomedans and Indian Christians. It was walled in towards the land, when Governor Pit ruled it". In 1783, Joseph Price used the term in his *Tracts*: Vol. I at page 60 in connection with '*some observations etc.*' thus : "When Mr. Hastings came to the government he added some new regulations, divided the *black* and *white* town (Calcutta) into 35 wards, and purchased the consent of the natives to go a little further off".

With the increase in prosperity the village Calcutta became a town. Many private houses had already been built and a separate residential area for Europeans had come into existence. The white town began at the present China bazar and ended at Hastings Street, which, however, did not exist at the time. In its place there was a navigable creek, which started from the Hooghly and continued eastward upto the Salt lakes and boats could ply up and down thereon. Barabazar lay on the northern limit of the European quarter and near it, round about the modern Murgihata area, the Portuguese and Armenians lived on opposite sides of a narrow strip of land. All the big traders lived in Barabazar, which was congested at the time. Merchants of every nationality except Europeans, namely, Arabs, Persians, Moghuls, Abyssinians, Chinese, Africans, Malayans and others from other parts of India converged on Barabazar. Beyond Barabazar to the north lay Sutanuti, where Bengalis of the better classes had begun to come and live in small numbers. Govindpur lay to the south and stretched from near the present High Court to Coolibazar. This was a respectable Bengali locality, whose residents considered the original settlers to be of low origin and refused to live in close

40. Long, op. cit., Appendices X and XI at 62-3.

41. Yule/Burnell—Hobson-Jobson (1986), 99-100.

proximity to them. At this time the total population numbered between 15 and 20 thousand.

In the 18th century L. De Grandpre, an officer of the French Army visited Calcutta more than once and gave us a graphic picture thereof during the governor-generalship of Lord Cornwallis and Sir John Shore. He has drawn a line between the north and south of the settlement and called the northern portion 'black town' as distinguished from the south. In his words: "The Black Town is to the north of Calcutta, and contiguous to it: it is extremely large: and its population at the turn of my last voyage, was computed at six hundred thousand Indians, women and children included".<sup>42</sup> By 1860 this division between the north and south became prominent as noticed by Dowleams: "The city is divided into European and Native portions, between Southern and Northern Divisions. The European quarter extends from along Park Street to the southern boundary of the town. From Park Street towards Lall Bazar which forms the boundary between the southern and northern Divisions, the character of the town gradually changes". He also noted that the southern portion had 3539 masonry houses, while the northern portion containing 7619 bighas of land had 9,823 masonry buildings and 41,917 huts huddled together".<sup>43</sup> The physical growth of Calcutta showed in its earlier years a tendency towards polarisation in terms of racial elements in its population and occupational contiguity. Thus the White Town of the English developed round the tank square and Chowringhee areas, while the Black Town of the Natives was confined mainly to the northern sector. And in between them lay what might be called the 'Brown Town' of non-European foreigners. A large part of the population in these sectors drew their main income as officials of the Company, merchants and landlords, who were the high-ups in society. Other classes also began to grow rapidly, such as artisans, labourers, weavers, small tradesmen, palanquin-bearers, boatmen, *banians*, *sarkars*, *gomostas*, *dobhasis* and the like.

This division into "European and native towns"—occasionally designated the "White and Black Towns"—had taken place before

42. Nair, P. T.—Calcutta in the 18 century (1984), 231.

43. Dowleams—'Calcutta' in 1860: *Calcutta—people and empire* (1975), eds. P. Chaudhury/A. Mukhopadhyaya, 9-11, 24

1756. The English factory with its warehouses, workshops, offices and outlying offices covered about 150 acres on the bank of the Hooghly, while the native town rose about half a mile to the north of the old fort with 3 or 4 villages remote from each other and from the English factory. These villages extended along the river from Banstala to Baghbazar and inland to the east of the Chitpur Road over Hogulkuria, Simla and Kalutola. The Armenians built a Church in 1724 to the south of Burrabazar—this lay between the Hindu town and the Christian town. Its steeple was completed in 1734 by Huzoori Mull.<sup>44</sup> Moorhouse specifies the area of the two towns thus: "The English Town was now (1742) a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, with a Black Town of natives, four miles in circumference beyond it. There were 4,00,000 people of both races here and in outlying villages". Trade was expected to be worth £ 1 million per annum and so the Company thought it fit to spend Rs. 25,000 for the excavation of the Mahratta Ditch.<sup>45</sup>

(v) *The Company "Investment"*.—The East India Company's purchases in India were called "Investment". In fact, this was the public trade of the Company. This investment was mainly provided by *dadni* (advance) merchants. In addition, there was ready money investment. The Setts and Bysacks were the most *dadni* merchants protected by the English. They acted as brokers of the Company. Omichand (Amir Chand) made his fortune under the aegis of his patron Bostom Das Sett and became his partner in *dadni* business. In 1748 the Calcutta Council persuaded the merchants to contract for *dadni* and ready money goods for about 30 lakhs of rupees. In 1751-52 the Company's Investment was as follows :

(1) *Dadni* contracts—10,53,756 ; (2) Ready money goods—3,52,054.

However, the *dadni* Investment was replaced by a new Investment system under which *gomastas* or paid agents of the Company made their purchases under the direct supervision of the Company's European servants. This led to the increase of the private trade of the Company's servants and to the abuse of the *dastak*. And the chief sufferers had been the "Moorish Government" and

44. Roy, op. cit., 205-6.

45. Moorhouse, G—Calcutta (Penguin, 1983), 40.

the rival Indian traders. The Nawab had a long *dastak* account to settle with the English. According to him, the English had defrauded the State to the tune of a crore and a half by covering the trade of the natives with the Company's *dastak*.<sup>46</sup>

(vi) *The fight for empire*—In 1690 Job Charnock founded the city of Calcutta, where, according to Hamilton, he "reigned more absolute than a Raja, only he wanted much of humanity".<sup>47</sup> In 1696 the Company obtained leave to fortify Calcutta and a *zemin-dari*, thus becoming both a landlord and a merchant under the Moghul Governor. The first half of the 18th century saw Calcutta's prosperity and the banias crowded into it, since the trade of the province became numerous. Yet, the Company's position vis-a-vis Bengal's Nawab Nazim was that of the humblest servant. And this was manifest when in 1715 John Russell the President while addressing the Moghul Governor described himself as "the smallest particle of dust, whose forehead rubbed on the ground on receiving the word of command". Further prosperity attended the Company when in 1717 they got the imperial *firman* to buy 38 villages and were confirmed in their *zemindari*.

Nawab Alivardi died in April, 1756. Since he had no son he nominated as his successor his daughter's son, Siraj-ud-daulah (the Lamp of the State), a youngman of 23. About him his well-wisher, Jean Law, the Chief of the French factory at Cossimbazar writes: "He had distinguished himself not only by all sorts of *debaucheries*, but by a revolting *cruelty*". The new Nawab had two enemies related to him by blood and they were not prepared to accept his accession. His maternal aunt Ghasiti Begum was one, who appointed Rajballabh as the Dewan of Dacca. The Nawab had arrested him on a charge of defalcation of funds and demanded in March 1756 accounts from him. Siraj imprisoned Rajballabh and sent troops to his village Rajnagar for arresting the members of his family and seizing his properties. Before the arrival of the troops, Rajballabh's son, Krishnaballabh took the members of the family and his valuables in boats and gave out

46. Sinha, N. K.—The Economic History of Bengal (1981), Vol. I, 6, 8-9.

47. Hamilton, A.—'A new account of East Indies (1686-1723)' Vol. II, 5; Nair, *op. cit.*, 5.



that he was going to visit the holy place of Puri ; but he came to Calcutta. The second was the Nawab's maternal cousin, the Governor of Purnea (in Behar), who had applied to the Delhi Sultan for *firman* in his favour. And the third was a more formidable enemy, Mir Jafar Ali Khan, who had married Alivardi's step-sister and became his General. His treachery to Siraj at different stages played a crucial role during 1756-57. The Siraj-English clash had two phases—Calcutta and Plassey.

#### A. *The Calcutta phase*

Siraj had grievances against the English because of the abuse of the *dastaks* as pointed out already. But these were accentuated by three factors. *First*, Roger Drake, the Chief of the Bengal factories did not congratulate the Nawab on his accession and offer him a present as was the custom. *Second*, the English granted asylum to Krishnaballabh, against whom there were serious charges of embezzlement. Siraj demanded his surrender through an emissary, who had been turned out by the English. *Third*, the English started further fortifications at Calcutta because of the directions from England that war might break out between England and France in Europe. But the English did not take any permission from the Nawab and he was determined to expel the English. Accordingly he seized the factory of Cossimbazar and ill-treated the prisoners. Besides, the Nawab marched upon Calcutta with an army of 30,000.

Siraj had a firm conviction that the English had a hand in the plot against him. He gathered round him lowborn flatterers, who dived into his ears that at Calcutta even the streets were paved with gold. If he were to cast his net in those waters, whatever came up would be nothing but first-rate stuff. So the Nawab set out in great pomp to conquer Calcutta. But he was disappointed. There was neither much merchandise nor any considerable amount of money in the Company's factory at Calcutta. There was the old fort at Tank Square, but in disrepair. On the bastions were a few antique cannon, but they were choked with rust. The powder and shot in the armoury were there only in name. Like a red radish, Fort William was nothing but show. Altogether there were 275 soldiers in the militia. Of these 70 were ill and 25 in the outlying districts. Only 180 remained fit for active service. Among them 40 were Europeans and the rest were

Eurasians of mixed parentage. At the head was Captain George Minchin who had never in his life fought a single battle. A few English factors and free merchants volunteered for service. The English army had swelled to 515 men with them. Governor Drake imprisoned Omichand in the fort because of his secret correspondence with the Nawab. Krishnadas was also put inside a cell. The Nawab had asked the neighbouring landowners not to supply food to the English, nor to help them in any way. At the news of the Nawab's approach all the native retainers and servants engaged by the English fled from Calcutta to a man. The Indian inhabitants left their houses at Calcutta and shifted to the other side of the river. Only the Black Zemindar, Govinda Mitter and his followers stayed on. On 15 June, 1756 the Nawab crossed the river near Hooghly and landed at Baranagar. The Calcutta Council had asked the Madras Council to send soldiers and ammunition. The English began to collect food and other necessities of life and store them within the fort. The English thought it would be foolish to defend the Black Town, as the Indian Quarters were then called. They followed the "Schorched earth policy". 'Fort William and environs' is shown in App. G.

### 1. *The battle for capture*

On June 16, 1756 a detachment of the Nawab's army reached the canal at Chitpur in order to reach Calcutta by his route. Ensign Picard came out of the redoubt at Perrin's Point, to the extreme north of the gardens and gave them a battle. A large number of the Nawab's soldiers were wounded and several killed. Mir Jafar, who was in command here, ordered retreat back to the Nawab's camp at Dum Dum. The English scored the first round. Thereafter Jagannath Singh, Omichand's headman told the Nawab's men of two different routes of entering the city—(1) the crossbridge at the intersection of the Dum Dum road with Calcutta near Tala; and (2) the causeway over the Mahratta Ditch near Seaklah. Sirajuddaulah with a detachment of his army entered the city by the bridge. On June 17 the rest of the army with elephants, horses, camels and heavy gun-carriages rolled along Bowbazar Street and poured into Barabazar and began plundering and burning down the little that remained. The Nawab had by

this time occupied Omichand's garden-house at Halsibagan, which became his head quarters.

(i) *The First Battle of Laldighi*—On June 18, the Battle of Laldighi started. The English realised that the enemy attack would come from the north-east through Lalbazar, since the Nawab's forces had taken possession of Barabazar. Fort William was thus made their base and from there two detachments of the militia were sent—one towards the east and the second to the north of the fort. The first line of the English battery started from the Mayor's Court at Lalbazar and extended to the ditch on the south side, i.e. from St. Andrew's Church to the site of the Government House, while the second line started from St. Anne's Church and circling the northern boundary of the fort, ended at the gate to the river on the west. A third line of battery protected the front of the fort and lay along the western side of Laldighi or the Great Tank.

Captain David Clayton was in command of the forces in front of the Mayor's Court and Holwell was second in command. The Nawab's soldiers had occupied the houses abandoned by the English and sitting inside fired at the latter through the windows. The English guns could only pierce the house-walls. The English artillery was without cover. So, the casualties were heavy. The situation was critical and Captain Clayton asked Holwell to let the Governor know that the battery was at its last stand. By the time Holwell returned from the fort, the English outpost had dispersed and the Nawab's men captured the guns. In the second round the English had been routed. Captain Minchin left the fort with members of the Council, William Frankland and Charles Manningham. The servants and cooks had left their posts and ran away.

(ii) *The Second Battle of Laldighi*—On June 19, the English were at the second outpost, defending the battery from St. Anne's Church. Someone whispered in the Governor's ear that the ammunition was almost exhausted. The words were heard by everybody and the women broke into lamentation and men were visibly upset. Everybody wanted to flee. At a stampede at the riverside about 200 Eurasian women and children were drowned. Governor Roger Drake had slipped away. One of the sentries fired at him, but the bullet had glanced off, grazing his temple.

Those left to bury the dead chose John Zephaniah Holwell as their Governor. He came to India in 1732 after his medical studies at Guy's Hospital in London and after making a round of the Patna and Dacca factories settled down at Calcutta as its First Surgeon. To augment his income he gave up the practice of medicine in 1752, joined the Company's Civil Service, and became Zemindar or Magistrate of Calcutta. Holwell refused to go in for the third round of the battle. He thought it better to fight from the shelter of the fort and the defence of the Church outpost was given up. The English sat within the fort like trapped rats. The Nawab's men set fire to the neighbouring houses, and the English spent the night in consternation and anxiety. 53 Dutch mercenaries made their escape and the rest sought consolation in drunkenness.

On the 29th June the Nawab's forces had come closer and surrounded the fort from three sides. Rapid shots were fired from the bastions and ramparts of Fort William and the enemy losses were heavy. 25 English soldiers had been killed and 70 wounded. At 12 o'clock the fury of the fighting abated. Omichand imprisoned in the fort was persuaded by Holwell to write a letter to Rajah Manickchand telling him that the English had no wish to carry the fight if the Nawab was kind enough to stop the battle. At 2 P.M. an important officer of the Nawab's army made signs from the High Court to the English to stop fighting. Holwell at once flew the white flag of truce. At 4 P.M. the Dutch soldiers broke down the inner gate of the fort leading to the water front. The Nawab's soldiers poured into the fort through this breach. One of the Nawab's captains came in and assured Holwell that they would not be molested if they surrendered their arms. Holwell took off his weapons and laid them down at his feet. Others followed suit. The fighting was over. Thus ended the Second Battle of Laldighi.

(iii) *The Black Hole Tragedy*—Siraj had been advancing towards the fort in a litter. Holwell mounting the wall greeted him with a deep salaam in the Indian manner. The Nawab raised his hands and answered the salute. He said he had been forced by Drake's obstinacy to destroy such a fine city and he was really sorry for this. Omichand and Krishnadas released from their cells salaamed the Nawab who honoured them with gifts of bro-

cade robes. All were freed. Only Holwell and some 60 other Englishmen were kept under strict surveillance so that they could not escape. Calcutta had fallen into the hands of Nawab Sirajud-daulah. At nightfall some of the men left at the fort drank a little too much to drown their sorrows. With the drink going to their heads, they soon grew rowdy and started an argument with the Nawab's guard leading to a free fight. The dungeon called the Black Hole and used as a prison for their delinquent soldiers had two small iron-barred openings in the wall and was 18 ft long and 14 ft. 10 inches wide. It was discovered in the next morning that nearly 30 people had been suffocated in the stifling heat of an Indian summer. This is known as the Black Hole Tragedy.

Holwell outwitted Siraj by publishing an account of the Black Hole Tragedy. To read it is more thrilling than any detective story. The story given out was that 146 men had been imprisoned and of them 123 died in the Black Hole. Holwell built the Black Hole Monument which was set up due west of the Writers' Buildings in 1760 when he became the Governor. In 1821 Governor-General Hastings removed the Cenotaph, for it made an irritating impression on the minds of the natives. But when Lord Curzon became the Viceroy of India, he looked up old records, plans and drawings and in 1902 had another monument—an exact replica of Holwell's—made of marble and placed it once more on its old site at the corner of Clive Street and Vivadi Bag (old Dalhousie Square). In 1939 it was finally removed to a graveyard.

(iv) *The fall of Calcutta and after*—After the fall of Calcutta there had been a vigorous hunt for the treasure. But Siraj could secure only Rs. 50,000. The hidden treasure could not, however, be discovered, since it did not exist. All the expensive stuff stored had been shipped to England 4 months ago and the goods due to arrive at Fort William had not yet reached their destination from the inland factories. The Nawab fumed with rage—he could not recover even the expenses of his grand expedition. In a fit of temper the Nawab renamed Calcutta Alinagar. He burned the President's house. The remaining Englishmen were ordered to leave Calcutta on pain of their arms and legs, noses and ears being cut off. The Nawab made Rajah Manickchand the Governor of Calcutta. And on June 24, he left Calcutta.

## 2. *The recapture of Calcutta*

The English fugitives found shelter at Fulta, 40 miles to the south of Calcutta. In time Walls, Collet and Holwell joined them. Drake had a boat called *Fort William* and proclaimed that it would be the Government House for the English Governor. The Madras Council had been apprised of the Calcutta disaster and it decided to send troops to Calcutta. Colonel Robert Clive and Admiral Charles Watson set out to recapture Calcutta. On October 16, 1756 Watson's men-of-war were loaded with 528 British soldiers, 940 Madras Sepoys and 14 field pieces. Besides, there were Admiral Watson's own sailors and accoutrements: with them the Council of Madras sent 5 of the Company's merchant vessels nicknamed Indiamen. Clive and Watson reached Fulta on December 15, 1756. The Directors of the Company replaced the Council by a Select Committee of which the President was Roger Drake and Clive and Watson its members. Major James Kilpatrick had already come with a few soldiers. Both Clive and Watson addressed letters to the Nawab. Meanwhile Manikchand made some superficial repairs to the fort at Tanna and proceeded with 2,000 men towards Budge Budge. At Mayapur just before one enters Budge Budge, Watson set Clive and his men ashore. Major Kilpatrick had also reached there. Both joined forces and marched forward. They arrived at Budge Budge at daybreak on December 29. Admiral Watson reached there with his battle-ships at half-past eight. Manikchand's troops fell on Clive's. In half an hour Clive broke the ranks of the 2000 and killed 200 of them. Four of the captains fell on the battlefield. A shot flew over Manikchand's head, taking his turban along with it. And he ran for Calcutta.

(i) *The fort of Budge Budge taken*—Meanwhile Watson's men disembarked and came to the aid of Clive. Manikchand's artillery opened fire on the ships. But Watson returned the salvo with a couple of shots from his 24-pounders and this silenced the firing from the Budge Budge fort. At 7 in the evening he landed a hundred more sailors under the command of Captain Eyre Coote. At 11 in the night one Strahan, a drunken soldier, swam across the ditch in front of the fort and clambered up the wall. As he stood with a pistol in one hand and a cutlass in the other, he shouted that the fort was his. He had shot one, cut down

the second and felled the third with a single blow of his clenched fist when he tried to snatch his cutlass. A large number of English force had come and the remaining soldiers of the Nawab fled. The fort was thus taken by the English. It was in good condition, but was razed to the ground, since it could be seized by the Nawab's army and obstruct the English in their passage up the river.

(iii) *The fall of Metiaburuz and Tanna forts*—The Company's forces were then on their march on Calcutta. Midway, on the east bank of the river stood the little mud fort of Metiaburuz, called Aligarh. Opposite stood the old fort of Tanna. Both fell into the hands of Watson without a fight. At that time the fame of the guns of English men-of-war had spread so much that the very sight of the battleships in the distance was enough to empty the forts in an instant. The English recovered 40 good cannon mounted on shining carriages from Tanna. These were their own property, kept there by Manikchand to intercept the English ships. Clive had landed his force at Metiaburuz and therefrom advanced towards Calcutta on foot, while Watson and his fleet proceeded up the river.

(iv) *Recovery of Calcutta*—The January 2, 1757 Watson fired twice at Fort William from his flagship while at some distance away from it. There was a slight skirmish on land. Watson's fleet reached the water front of the fort at 10 o'clock and everything had become quiet by then. The fort was empty. Manikchand had left his governorship of Calcutta and did not stop in his flight until he reached Hooghly. Captain Eyre Coote and Captain King came ashore and occupied Fort William.

The Admiral had ordered that none would be admitted into the fort without his leave. Clive stepped forward and came to know that Admiral Watson had appointed Eyre Coote the Governor of Fort William. The guards at the gate knew Clive and they allowed him to pass through. On his entry into the fort Clive demanded the keys from Coote who apprised Watson of the situation. Watson replied that Clive's occupation of the fort with his own men would not be pleasant for him. Clive wrote back to Watson, telling him that he would gladly hand over the charge to him in case he himself came to take possession of the fort. Watson then left his flagship and entered the fort. Clive returned the

keys to him and the Admiral sent for Drake and made them over to him. Once more Calcutta belonged to the English ; but it was in utter ruin.<sup>48</sup>

**B : The Plassey phase**—On January 3 1757 both Colonel Clive and Admiral Watson declared war on Nawab Sirajuddaulah each by his own separate proclamation. Clive camped in the fields of Baranagar, since it was considered unsafe to stay in the tumble-down old Fort William. Events played into his hands and these are narrated below :

### 1. *The Treaty of Alinagar*

#### (a) *Attacks on Hooghly*

Clive was not a man to twiddle his thumbs in the wilds of Baranagar. He chalked out a plan for a large-scale attack on Hooghly. His experience in the south had taught him the lesson that three-fourths of the battle would be over in case the people of India could be terrorised into a panic and then the remaining part could be won by fighting. By this time the ship *Walpole* had arrived from Madras with 3 to 4 hundred Madras sepoy trained by him and plenty of ammunition and military stores. The Company's forces were strengthened by Watson's 130 seasoned men and Clive's 300 Madras sepoy. With them went 3 warships. Major James Kilpatrick led the expedition with the *Bridgewater*, in which Captain Eyre Coote and Captain King accompanied him. The *Bridgewater*, however, went aground near Perrin's gardens at Chitpore. At last she could sail and come upto Baranagore. But none was familiar with the course of the river. So, Captain Smith of the *Bridgewater* boarded a Dutch boat and seized one of her officers and hustled him across on board the English ship. The English ships reached the Hooghly waterfront on January 9. A number of sailors were put ashore and they at once set fire to all the houses and hutments in the town. Grape-shot rained down on the Hooghly fort from the invading boats. 2,000 men of the Nawab's army fled and Manikchand also in the dark. During 10-19 January English sailors and soldiers burned and destroyed

48. Chatterjee, T.—*The road to Plassey* (1960), Chaps. VI/VII, 80-113 ; Majumdar, R. C.—*History of Medieval Bengal* (1974), 111-16 ; Roberts, P. E.—*History of British India* (1958), 132-37



all the houses or barns between Hooghly and Bandel. After this the English returned to Calcutta.

*(b) Halsibagan Skirmishes*

The Nawab could not remain quiet after this. On January 19 he had advanced upto Triveni with 60,000 infantry, 40 cavalry, 50 war-elephants and 30 large-calibre guns. The English had 711 European soldiers, 100 gunners, 1,300 Indian Sepoys, and 14 six-pounders. The English became nervous and sent a truce proposal to the Nawab. Manikchand had told the Nawab that the then Englishmen were not like the dolts he had knocked out at Laldighi : Clive's men were of a different stamp altogether. The Nawab wrote to Clive through Jagat Sett that he wanted the Dutch and the French to arbitrate on the dispute between himself and the English. But the Dutch were reluctant to mediate, while the English unwilling to admit the French into their affairs. So Clive sent two emissaries—John Walsh and Luke Scrafton—to the Nawab, but they failed to meet him later. However, on February 3, 1757 Nawab Sirajuddaulah entered Calcutta through Dum Dum by Barasat road so as to avoid a clash with Clive's men at Baranagar. And his camp was set up round Omichand's gardens at Halsibagan. The emissaries met the Nawab on February 4. The first condition of Clive's truce proposal was that the Nawab should leave Calcutta immediately. And the discussion stopped there for the night. However, the two emissaries secretly left the Nawab's camp at night and hurried to Clive's camp at Baranagar. Actually, they were spies sent to get information about Siraj's army.

Clive realised that it would not be wise to wait any longer. At his request Watson sent 550 sailors who landed at Perrin's gardens at 2 a.m. The march to capture Siraj in person began at 3 in the morning with 550 British soldiers, 550 seamen, 800 Indian sepoy, 60 European gunners and 2 fieldpieces. This army drew up near Halsibagan. Because of a thick mist, everything was shrouded in darkness and Clive fumbled. At this time a rocket came from the other side and burst on a chest. There was an explosion that killed a number of Clive's men. It was followed by the charge of the Nawab's cavalry on the English troops. However, there ensued a fierce fighting. The English artillery went on firing. When the mist cleared by 9 a.m. it was found that

the English had come inside the Nawab's camp. But the Nawab had already gone to Govind Mitter's garden house nearby. So, Clive's energies were spent in vain. With difficulty the English could cut their way through and reach the causeway at Sealdah, because the Nawab's artillery had been drawn along the Mahratta Ditch. Clive came to Bowbazar-crossing and then to Lalbazar. And at about 12 noon he with his men entered Fort William. In this skirmish the English lost 27 British Soldiers, 12 sailors and 18 Indian sepoy, while 70 European soldiers, 12 seamen and 55 sepoy were wounded. Besides, 2 field pieces had to be left in the Nawab's camp. The English losses were more than those suffered at the Battle of Plassey.

(c) *The treaty signed*

Though Clive did not succeed in bringing back Siraj as his captive, he was able to strike terror into the hearts of the Nawab's men. They refused to stay anywhere near him. So the Nawab left Halsibagan and moved to Dhakuria Lakes. He wrote a letter to the French General Bussy in the south to come to Bengal and help him against the English. It was this that made the Nawab to delay the peace negotiations. But the French did not arrive from the south. *Secondly*, the formidable Durani King, Ahmad Shah Abdali had sacked Mathura and was about to knock at the doors of Delhi. Maybe he would eventually invade Bengal. *Thirdly*, all the officials and advisers urged the Nawab to conclude a treaty with the English. *Finally*, the night attack at Halsibagan made him nervous. Hence, the Nawab was forced to sign on February 9 the Treaty of Alinagar, in which he practically accepted all the conditions dictated by the English. The terms of the Treaty were as follows:—

- (i) The English would be free to establish their factories wherever they wished in Bengal and to conduct their trade as of old.
- (ii) All the privileges granted by Emperor Farrukhsiyar in 1717 were confirmed.
- (iii) The Nawab would compensate the losses suffered by the English.
- (iv) The English might build a fort at Calcutta and have a mint and stamp their own Bengal *sicca* rupees.

Besides, the treaty led to some give-and-take behind the scenes. The Select Committee did not know what Clive had personally received from the Nawab. However, he informed the Secret Committee of the Directors in London of it so as to save him from the trouble arising afterwards. The Company's draft treaty read thus : "That restitution be made to the Company of their factories and settlements at Calcutta, Cossimbazar, Dacca etc., which have been taken from them ; that all money and effect taken be restored in the same condition ; that an equivalent in money be given for such goods as are damaged, plundered or lost". The Nawab in reply wrote : "Whatever of the Company's effects are in the Nawab's possession shall be restored". He refused to compensate for the losses suffered at other places except to restore "whatever has been seized and taken by orders and accounted for in my sircary (Govt.) books". It is known that the Nawab agreed to pay Rs. 3,00,000 for the English losses on condition that 40,000 gold pieces (Rs. 3,60,000) be paid to the Indian negotiators like Ranjit Ray, Omicland and others. However, the entire amount of Rs. 6,60,000 was appropriated by the Company. Here one has to remember that in those days secret give-and-take was not considered wrong. On the other hand, if anybody refused to accept such gifts regarding them as bribes, people thought he must be off his head. So, the moralities of a past age cannot be measured by a tape-line of the present. For, this is nothing but the fallacy of anachronism."

## 2. *Fall of Forte d' Orleans*

- A news came from Madras that war had broken out in Europe between France and England. The Madras Governor advised the Calcutta Select Committee to seize Chandernagore. Clive agreed at once, but Watson did not, since the Nawab had not broken any of the treaty terms. Watson was not the Company's servant. On February 11, 1757 Siraj wrote to Clive : "I call God and his Prophet to witness that I have made peace with you and with the English nation ; that as long as I live I will look upon your enemies as my enemies, and when you write to me that you stand in need of my assistance I will give it you". Clive tried to persuade Watson to write for the Nawab's permission.

saying that since the French were now at war with the English, they had become his enemy. All this time Watts had been writing letters from Murshidabad to incite the Select Committee. Admiral Watson wrote a personal letter to Sirajuddaulah, asking him to make good his promise by helping the English against the French. In case the Nawab did not keep his word, Watson concluded: "I will kindle such a flame in your country as all the water in the Ganges shall not be able to extinguish". On March 12, the Nawab's letter reached Calcutta, in which he said that only a few days ago the fires of discord had been put out and he must not rekindle them. At this the Select Committee asked Watson to launch an expedition against the French at Chandernagore in the name of the King of England. Meanwhile, Clive broke up his camp at Baranagar, crossed the river and marched towards Chandernagore. On March 12, 1757 he pitched his tents in the gardens of Gherita, near the French town. Nandakumar Rai, known as Nuncoomar, the Magistrate of Hooghly had come to an understanding with Clive on the promise of a reward, namely, that he would keep his Moghul soldiers out of the way so as to facilitate Clive's advance. •

On March 13, Clive asked Pierre Renault, the Governor of Chandernagore to deliver the French Forte d' Orleans to the English. No answer came, for he decided to fight the English. Meanwhile Jean Law, the head of the Cossimpore French factory pressed Siraj to send his army to Chandernagore; but the Nawab hummed and hawed. At last he ordered Durlabhram, Tanikchand and Mohanlal to get ready. However, with the bursting of the first shell from Clive's gun, Nandakumar informed the Nawab that the French fort had fallen. The 2,000 Moghul soldiers were in this way prevented from joining the French. On March 15, Watson's three men-of-war—the *Kent*, *Tyger*, and *Salisbury*—came up the river and anchored at Cowgachi opposite Chandernagore. Clive announced that any Frenchman joining the English would be rewarded. At this, Lt. Caesar de Terraneau deserted and came over to the English. The French had chained the country boats together and scuttled them in the river. A secret passage had been left open and the French might come and go through it. This Lt. Terraneau showed to the English. By March 22, other English ships had reached Cowgachi and joined Watson's fleet. At dawn, Clive began bombarding Chan-

Chandernagore from the south-east. A hundred guns roared from the English men-of-war. The bombardment lasted for 2 hours at a stretch. The French could not stand the assault. The Governor surrendered and at noon signed the Articles of Capitulation.<sup>50</sup>

### 3. *The Battle of Plassey*

Robert Clive was moved by ambition, cupidity and the example of de Bussy. He thought that the Nawab's treasury of Murshidabad had 40 million sterling. Overnight he found himself the de Bussy of Bengal who could dispose of their riches to the Company and his followers. The de Bussy pattern was that of the European-sponsored Indian State and Clive had this in mind when he sailed for Bengal. In other words, Bengal could be run in the interest of the Company's trade. It was thought that the whole annual investment of the Company could be met from the revenue surplus leaving the whole proceeds of trade for profit, with, of course, corresponding advantages for the Company's servants. To this end he selected the most, eligible pretender in the person of the elderly general Mir Jafar and helped by the Nawab's mingled rashness and timidity, placed him on the *masnad* after a few anxious moments of indecision and the cannonade of Plassey in June, 1757. In these events Clive showed qualities of a high order, since he moved with, deftness and resolution through a maze of uncertainty and intrigue. And these were diplomatic rather than military, for the actual fighting was slight.<sup>51</sup>

#### (a) *Intrigues and Treacheries*

##### (i) *Removal of Law*

Chandernagore had been taken without Nawab's consent by sheer force of arms. Naturally therefore the Nawab would be bound to oust the English from Bengal. On the other hand it would be foolish to ruin the good work they had begun by stopping where they were. The Nawab could not decide what to do—whether to support the English or the French. Clive took it upon himself to make up the Nawab's mind for him from a dis-

tance. So, he carried on an invisible battle against Sirajuddaulah through Watts. In modern parlance this was 'cold war'. Watts went on repeating daily new complaints, new demands, new threats—the Nawab was breaking this or that condition of the treaty; the Select Committee was annoyed, Watson was angry; Clive was furious. Clive had one hand at the Nawab's throat and the other at his feet. So, at times he would placate the Nawab; but at other times he would point out a lack of graciousness on the latter's part. At Clive's instigation Watts began to din the old slogan into the Nawab's ear: the French were the enemies of the English, so they were the Nawab's enemies. Law was in the charge of the French factory at Cossimbazar and a true friend of the Nawab. But Siraj began to suspect him because of Watts's insinuations. Debauchery had completely ruined the Nawab's body and mind and Clive became the winner. On April 18, 1757 Law had to leave Cossimbazar for Patna. His last words to the Nawab were: "Farewell, my friend. Perhaps we shall never meet again". And they never did.

#### (ii) *Conspiracy to oust Nawab*

Clive's brain worked best when matters became complicated. He correctly surmised that a plot had been secretly hatched against Sirajuddaulah. And most people took to the English for help. It was a Hindu conspiracy. Mahatabchand was the head of the rich banking house of Jagat Sett. Daily he had to put up with indignities at the hands of the Nawab. One day the latter threatened him with circumcision. Jagat Sett then opened secret negotiations with the English through his agent, Ranjit Rai. The English had Omichand, who began to spend most of the time at Murshidabad. Rai Durlabhram also joined the conspiracy, since he had been degraded. Mohanlal, the Kashmiri Brahman had gained ascendancy at Siraj's court. At this all others—both Hindu and Muslim—found the situation intolerable. At Hooghly Nandakumar had been tempted by Omichand on behalf of the English with large sums of money. Hence, Nandakumar began to send false reports to the Nawab's government. A Hindu governor was out of the question. A Mussalman had to be found, who might sit on the throne of Bengal. Jagat Sett's party selected Yar Lutf Khan and this was supported by Omichand. But Clive decided against it. He wanted a man who would govern the country

at the dictates of the English. Clive had already decided on Mir Jafar and this choice was made from Watts's description of the man. It was the result of his uncanny intuition. Mir Jafar was the most suitable person from the English viewpoint. He agreed to the basest treason against his sovereign because the sceptre of the King was so tempting. When everything was almost ready Omichand began to give trouble. He demanded 5% of the value of Siraj's treasures or 30 lakhs of rupees cash down, otherwise he would divulge the plot. Clive pretending to bargain agreed to pay 20 lakhs of rupees.

(iii) *Two treaties signed*

Clive had two treaties drawn up—one written on white paper, the other on red. The Council at Calcutta agreed to the secret treaties on 1st May, 1757. The latter gave Omichand 20 lakhs of rupees as his share of the loot; but the white paper gave him nothing and his name was not even mentioned in it. Both were signed and sealed. Mir Jafar had already signed the red paper in blank, but Watson refused to put his name to the false treaty. Then Clive had Watson's name forged on it by a young writer, Henry Lushington. On reading the red paper Omichand's face beamed with joy. The white treaty was sent to Watts at Cossimbazar for Mir Jafar's signature. On June 4, Watts visited Mir Jafar in a covered litter and had the treaty signed by him in the inner apartment of his palace. The Select Committee received the sealed deed on June 11. The terms in short, *inter alia*, were as follows:<sup>52</sup>

1. The terms of Company's treaty with Sirajuddaulah as well as the privileges obtained from the previous Nawab's were to be confirmed.
  2. Within the Ditch surrounding the borders of Calcutta there were tracts belonging to several zamindars and these would be granted to the English Company; and they would also be given 600 yards outside the Ditch.
  3. All the lands south of Calcutta as far as Culpee should be the zamindarce of the English Company and all the officers of those parts should be under their jurisdiction and the revenues paid by them in the same manner with other zamindars.
52. Majumdar, R. C.—History of Medieval Bengal (1974), 119-21; Ray, N. R., op. cit., 27-8.

4. The Nawab would pay "a crore of rupees in consideration of the losses which the English Company sustained by the plunder and capture of Calcutta and the charges occasioned by the maintenance of their forces, a sum of 50 lakhs of rupees for the effects plundered from the English inhabitants of Calcutta, 20 lakhs of rupees for the effects plundered from the Gentoos and Mussalmen and other subjects of Calcutta (and) 7 lakhs of rupees for the effects plundered from the Armenian merchants of Calcutta":
  - (a) The distribution of the sums allotted to "natives, English inhabitants, Gentoos and Mussalmen" shall be left to the Admiral (Watson), Col. Clive and the rest of the Council, "to be disposed of by them to whom, they think proper".
  - (b) One half of the total amount was to be paid, two-thirds of their money and one-third in jewels, plates and gold : the other half should be discharged within 3 years in 3 equal and annual payments.
5. The Nawab would not build any fort on the Ganges to the south of the Hooghly.
6. The French would be driven out of Bengal.
7. The friends and enemies of the English were to be treated as friends and enemies of the Nawab.

(iv) *Critique of the transaction*

Robert Orme has observed in respect of Omichand's insistence on his commission that the least objectional course would have been to pay him his commission, excessive though it was and to leave him to enjoy it "in oblivion and contempt". But Clive thought otherwise : "Art and policy were warrantable in defeating the purpose of such a villain". And he won the consent of the secret committee of the council entrusted with the negotiations.

*Secondly*, Clive had defended the false treaty. The critical position of the affairs at the time affords a palliative, but not an adequate justification. In fact his action suggested Horace Walpole's reflection : "Our governors there (in India) have learned



more of their treachery and injustice, than they have taught them of our discipline".<sup>53</sup>

(b) *To the fields of Plassey*

(i) *From Murshidabad*—Sirajuddaulah got scent of the conspiracy against him. One day he insulted the *Vakil* of the English, expelled him from his court and sent a detachment of his army to the fields of Plassey so as to frighten him further. When this news reached Calcutta on June 13, Clive ordered his men to strike camp at once and march towards the capital of Murshidabad. The Select Committee wrote to Watts saying that all Englishmen should at once come down to Calcutta. Major Kilpatrick was asked to join Clive with his regiment. The English had a hunting-box at Madipur, where they used to go for a little sport. Watts begged leave of the Nawab with the utmost humility to go to Madipur. He had two companions, Mathew Collet and Percy Sykes. Permission was given. When Watts reached the fields with his companions their grooms were dismissed. Taking a single servant with them they rode swiftly along the country lanes upto Agradwip. Then they left their horses to the servant's care and took a ferry-boat to cross the Ganges. On June 14, they landed at Katwa, where they found Clive and his army.

Some days back the Nawab came to know of Mir Jafar's perfidy, ordered his arrest, and sent troops to surround his house. Mir Jafar informed Clive of his predicament and requested him to come to his aid. By surrounding Mir Jafar's house Siraj had turned him a sworn enemy. Now it suddenly occurred to him that by entreaties he might be able to win him over. So, he withdrew the force and the cannon and sent for him. But Mir Jafar refused to meet the Nawab. So the latter met the former and met in his house. On June 15, the Nawab humbly begged pardon of him and besought his help against the English. Mir Jafar vowed on the Quran to remain on the side of the Nawab on three terms :

- (i) Mir Jafar would not serve the Nawab any more after the present crisis was over.
- (ii) He would not attend the *Durbar*.
- (iii) He would not take any active part in the impending hostilities.

Just at this moment Siraj got a letter from Clive, saying that he was coming to Murshidabad to plead for justice. All the terms of the treaty would be reviewed to arrive at a settlement. There were many persons of integrity and Clive would be prepared to accept their verdict as adjudicators. The Nawab saw that there was no way out but to fight the English. In this context Siraj accepted Mir Jafar's terms and appointed Mir Jafar as his General to fight the English. The Nawab noticed that his captains and soldiers were in a state of flurry and in case he dithered they would all join the conspiracy against him. So, he left the capital and started for the open fields of Plassey. Clive would have to enter Murshidabad by that way. Two miles to the south of the capital, at a short distance from the bend of the Ganges where Clive would cross the river, the Nawab's soldiers had already entrenched themselves. The army consisted of 40,000 infantry, 20,000 cavalry and 50 guns all of high calibre, 32-and 24-pounders.

(ii) *From Calcutta*—Clive had reached Katwa on June 14. Mir Jafar was to have met him there, but he was not available. Clive thus began to think if he had made a mistake in trusting such a man. He wrote to the Select Committee at Calcutta, saying that he would not cross the river until Mir Jafar met him. But the Select Committee wrote back that there was nothing to fear. However, the letter was written in such ambiguous terms that Clive was placed between the two horns of a dilemma. In case he advanced and was defeated, it would be his fault. On the contrary, if he held back and was overtaken by the Nawab, he would be responsible therefor. What would Clive do? This question had been agitating his mind. He halted for 4 days and on June 19 Eyre Coote with a small band of picked soldiers occupied the near-by mud fort of Katwa. Coote was a Major, promoted by Clive 2 days ago. With Major Coote approaching the fort the Nawab's soldiers had left it. Clive waited at Katwa for another 2 days, but Mir Jafar did not come.

Clive was vexed by the question : whether to attack or stay back? He invited his Captains to a Council of War. Votes were taken, Clive himself voted against the advance and 13 out of 20 were of the same opinion. The seven ready to fight were led by Major Eyre Coote. He argued thus. In the first place, the courage of the soldiers had risen high because of victory in one

battle after another. Now if they were to hang back, their morale would completely break down. *Secondly*, if they had to wait, they should do so at Calcutta and not at this out-landish place. *Thirdly*, if they went back to Calcutta they would be laughed out of the place. The meeting broke up. Clive paced up and down the camping-ground with his hands locked behind him, his head sunk down upon his chest. In other words, "Clive was deep in thought—he meditated for an hour in solitude". And his mind was made up: he summoned Major Eyre Coote and ordered the march to begin again early next morning. That very night a letter came from Mir Jafar, saying that he was waiting at the field of Plassey under the Nawab's strict surveillance. And he would meet Clive there. Clive's decision to march is the third stage in the process of thought, called "*Illumination*", the two previous stages being *Preparation* and *Incubation*. In the stage of *Preparation* the problem was "investigated in all directions" as in the War Council meeting. The second stage of *Incubation* was seen in his one hour's meditation. The 'march-idea' came at the *Illumination stage*.<sup>54</sup> Mir Jafar's letter indicated the fourth stage of *verification*.

On June 22, Clive and his army set out during daylight. They crossed the Ganges near Agradwip and arrived at the field of Plassey at midnight. The English had in all 950 British soldiers, 2,100 Indian *sepoys* and *paltans*, 8 six-pounders and 2 large howitzers. In front of the English army lay a mango-grove over 500 acres of land, enclosed by a breast-high earthen wall. This was known as Lakshabag. A hundred thousand mango trees stood in rows, where the main body of the English army bivouacked for the night. Clive and his officers occupied the hunting-lodge near the Ganges, where the Nawab used to rest while on hunting. It was known that Sirajuddaulah had been waiting with his army, a mile and a half ahead of them.

### (c) *The battle*

It was June 23, 1757-Thursday. On hearing the War-drums sounded from far-off Clive went to the roof of the hunting-lodge and saw through his telescope that the Nawab's men were com-

54. Wallas, G.—*The Art of Thought* (1949). 52, 66-7.

ing out of the trenches. It was a vast sea of humanity surging forward from the crevices of entrenchments. Clive brought out his men from the mango-grove and arranged them for battle in front of the earthwork. The ratio of Nawab's men to Clive's was 20:1. The English soldiers were in the middle and to their right and left 3 field pieces were posted athwart. On each side of the red-faced English soldiers in scarlet uniform stood the black Madras sepoy and the latest Lal Palton or native Red Regiment, built up and trained by Clive at Calcutta in the latest tactics of warfare. Only a few were left in the mango-grove to guard the baggage and stores. Major James Kilpatrick, Major Archibald Grant, Major Eyre Coote and Captain George Gaupp commanded the English wings under Clive. To their left flowed the Ganges and on its bank stood the hunting-lodge, the temporary headquarters of Clive. Two hundred yards in front stood the French gunner Sinfray on the Nawab's side with a small tank, 40 artillery men and 4 light field pieces. Behind them were the crack troops commanded by General Mir Madan, while on the left stood Mohanlal with 5,000 horse and 7000 foot. The rest of the Nawab's army stood on a high mound nearby. At a little distance away stood in a semi-circle to the right of the English, Rai Durlabhram, Yar Lutf Khan and Mir Jafar, each with his own brigade. The battle field of Plassey is shown in App. H.

(i) *The long cannonade*—The battle began at 8 o'clock with Sinfray firing the first shot. In half an hour 30 men on the English side had been wounded. Clive realised that even if 10 men of the Nawab's army were killed for every one of his, he could not expect a victory. So he retreated into the mango-grove. The Nawab's army advanced a little but could not do much harm to the English since all their shots flew over the heads of the retreating army and damaged only the branches of the mango-trees. The English ensconced themselves in the grove and made a few embrasures in the surrounding mud wall and began to fire through them. Their grape-shot was so deadly that innumerable enemy soldiers fell. Until 11 in the morning both sides went on firing at each other without any decisive effect. Clive was thinking of a night attack dreaded by the Indian soldiers.

(ii) *Downpour and Retreat*—After 11 came the torrential downpour. For half an hour it rained incessantly and turned the field into a muddy mess. The Nawab's ammunition-boxes were uncovered and the powder had become dripping wet and useless. General Mir Madan thought that the English must be in the same plight and charged at them with a thousand men. But the English ammunition had been safely covered. They met Mir Madan's forces with a deadly fire. As a result not only Mir Madan, but his son-in-law, Badri Ali Khan, Captain Nawbey Singh Hazari and several lesser officers were killed on the spot. So the Nawab's soldiers retreated to their trenches; and only Sinfray and the French artillery held firm. Mir Jafar, Yar Luf Khan and Rai Durlabhram stood open-mouthed like automats. This was so because they had been waiting to see which side would win. If the English would be losing, they would pounce on them and claim the victory themselves. When the Nawab heard of Mir Madan's death, he became extremely upset and clutched his head in despair. He sent for Mir Jafar. Placing his turban at Mir Jafar's feet he cried: "Now my life and honour in your hands. You can save or slay me as you wish". Mir Jafar swore on the Quran that he would fight the English and save the Nawab, but on the next morning. Thereafter he returned to his post and sent a letter to Clive, saying that it was the best time to attack the Nawab's army. This reached Clive after the Battle of Plassey had been fought and won. Rai Durlabhram also came to the Nawab and counselled him that nothing more could be done that day. And the Nawab need not stay in the battlefield, since the Generals would be enough to guard the posts for the night.

(iii) *The English attack*—However, General Mohanlal did not agree to stop fighting as Mir Jafar had advised. There had been little fight and the withdrawal would mean defeat for the Nawab and honour to the English. There would remain nothing to be done on the morrow. Meanwhile Mohanlal prepared himself for another attack on the English. With the fury of the firing abating Clive had been to the hunting-lodge to change his wet clothes. At the time someone came with a news that Major Kilpatrick with 250 soldiers and two field pieces had been advancing towards the French without Clive's orders, since the French were alone in the

field. Clive at once ran to the place and rebuked the Major ; but a glance at the situation convinced him that he had done the right thing. Then Clive himself advanced towards the French with more troops brought from the mango-grove. The French realised that it would be sheer madness to face Clive only with a number of gunners. So, they limbered their guns, walked backwards, and took up their position on the redoubt at the mouth of the entrenchments. Clive then occupied the position by the small tank abandoned by the French, who now opened fire from the redoubt. At this Mohanlal also came out of the trenches to give battle. Leaving a few men at the tank, Clive advanced still closer with the rest of his little army and climbed the mound by the hallowed brick field. This was 200 yards away from the redoubt.

A severe fighting now began. The Nawab's men fired their muzzle-loaders but the antiquated weapons were of no avail against Clive's guns. Moreover, none knew who was leading the Nawab's army. Each man fought as best as he could according to the dictates of his fancy. The soldiers coming out of the trenches were unable to reform their lines. Because of lack of guidance, the horses, draught oxen, and ammunition-waggons advanced too far, became bogged in the mud and completely screened the fighters. A single shot from the English killed a hundred animals at a time. But the French fought with renewed vigour. At 4 in the afternoon Nawab Sirajuddaulah gave up all hope. He abandoned the battle and rode off at full speed towards the capital on a fleet-riding camel. At once chaos broke out in the Nawab's camp. The next moment Clive gathered all his soldiers and in a flash sprang like a panther on the redoubt. This showed his genius. It is doubtful if any other man could have attempted such a feat with so few men. The Nawab's troops could no longer hold out against the English and a general rout followed. They left their baggage, guns and stores behind ; they scurried away in different directions. Clive came and seized the Nawab's camp. By 5 all was over. In this battle the English lost 4 European and 14 Indian soldiers while 13 Europeans and 30 Indians were wounded. But on the Nawab's side also about 500 were killed. The victorious Clive ordered the march towards the capital. The westering sun slowly

disappeared in the bosom of the Ganges and the shadows of night engulfed all.<sup>55</sup>

(d) *The post-Plassey sequel*

The English soldiers marched with Clive upto Daudpur and rested there for the night. On June 24, Mir Jafar met Clive at the latter's camp at Daudpur. The sentries salaamed him. He was wondering whether they would attack him. Then Clive came out of his tent and embraced him crying humbly : "Why, it is the Nawab Sahib ! Your Excellency is welcome". Mir Jafar felt assured. On Clive's advice Mir Jafar speedily set out for Murshidabad to capture Siraj. But the latter smelt danger and under cover of darkness left his palace, holding the hand of his wife, the Begum Lutfunnisa and clutching his baby daughter to his breast. On June 26, Mir Jafar was formally installed as the Nawab. On June 29, Clive entered Murshidabad with 200 European soldiers and 500 sepoys. Several lakhs of people witnessed this victorious march. Clive said later : If they had so wished they could have annihilated his force only with lathis and brickbats ! But the Bengalis did nothing of the sort. People had no worries about this, since "one King goes, another comes : Bengal's throne ne'er vacant remains". In the evening Clive attended the *Durbar* and requested Mir Jafar to occupy the throne. But the latter insisted that the Colonel must lead him to the *masnad* of Bengal or he would not sit on it. Clive then took him by the hand, set him down on the throne and himself greeted him as the Subadar of Bengal, Behar and Orissa. The Emperor of Delhi later ratified the appointment.

Mir Jafar held his first Court in the afternoon. After this the vaults of Siraj's treasury were opened. They had not the promised money. The real value was discovered to be £ 1,50,000, while the English claims under the public and private treaty amounted to over two and three-quarter millions. Clive himself received £ 2,34,000, in addition to the *Jagir* of the district of 24-parganas, fetching a quit-rent during the rest of his life of a sum of £ 30,000 a year. Mir Jafar had procured from the Emperor the title of *Omrah* or noble. The word is the Arabic

plural of 'Amir' and applied collectively to the higher officials at a Mahomedan Court. But in European narratives it is used as a singular for a lord or grandee of that court.<sup>56</sup> It was customary, when this rank was conferred on native subjects, for a *jagir*, or revenue derived from land, to be given them to support their rank. In Clive's case the title was merely honorary. However, he thought that a quarter of a million was not a sufficient reward for his services to Mir Jafar, he wrote to the Nawab's financial minister, informing him that he had been made an *Omrah* without a *jagir*. The hint was taken and Clive was given this *jagir* of 24-Parganas. The acceptance of the *jagir* made him the servant of the company, also its landlord—this position was highly improper. The British Parliament appointed a Committee of Inquiry, in 1772 to probe into the affairs of Bengal. But it was made into an investigation into the action of Clive in securing as the Company's servant a fortune out of the spoils of the Battle of Plassey. Answering the Committee's charges Clive exclaimed with passion: "Mr. Chairman, Sir and Gentlemen, consider the situation in which the victory of Plassey had placed me. A great prince was dependent on my pleasure, an opulent city lay at my mercy; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles: I walked through vaults, which were opened to me alone, piled on either hand with gold and jewels! Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation".<sup>57</sup>

Mir Jafar did not have the promised money in the treasury. So a new arrangement was arrived at through the mediation of Jagat Sett. In terms of this Mir Jafar during 1757-1760 paid Rs. 200,25,000 to the English Company, Rs. 58,70,000 to the principal officers thereof and Rs. 3,50,000 a year to Clive. On July 3, 1757 the first payment to the Company was loaded in 200 boats, sailing for Calcutta in a procession with military band playing. The same day saw another procession parading the streets of the city with Siraj's body on the back of an elephant. Previously Siraj had been fleeing from the capital. He wanted to take the Purnea Road through Malda so as to join Jean Law at Patna.

56. Yule/Burnwell, op cit., 63.

57. Reports of the House of Commons, vol. 3, at 154-55.



Thinking that he might be recognised, he left the Purnea road and took the road leading to Rajmahal. Being weak with hunger and thirst he took shelter in a fakir's hut. The fakir Dana Shah had recognised the Nawab at a glance. Some time ago he had his nose and ears chopped off at Siraj's orders and the wounds had not healed as yet. The fakir asked him to wait and at once informed the Magistrate of Rajmahal, Mir Daud, Mir Jafar's brother. The latter at once came with a posse of guards and took Siraj prisoner on June 30. Siraj was brought back to Murshidabad in an old ramsack hackney by noon on July 2. Mir Jafar was to take a nap after his meal. He could not decide what to do with the captive and so left him in charge of his son Miran, who wanted to get rid of him. But none consented. At last Muhammad Beg agreed. Siraj's father had brought the orphan up and Siraj's mother arranged for his wedding with splendour. Muhammad Beg wanted to throw off the chains of gratitude. He came from Mir Jafar to carry out the nefarious task and did not give Siraj even time to wash himself and say his last prayers. He simply battered Siraj to death. Earlier Siraj fell at his feet and begged for his life. On July 3, Siraj's body was mounted on an elephant and taken round the streets of the city to let the people know that the Nawab Sirajuddaulah was dead. The elephant was moving slowly down the road when it suddenly stopped at a spot. It was here 3 years before Siraj had Hussain Kuli Khan, the Dewan of Dacca murdered (April, 1754). Two drops of blood dripped down Siraj's body and fell on that very ground. The elephant then reached Siraj's old house and a huge crowd had gathered. His mother Amina Begum saw her son's corpse, came out with bare feet and dishevelled clothes and flung herself at the animal's feet. A nobleman who lived next door saw this and had her dragged and thrust back into the zenana. The body was then thrown down into the market square, none of the on-lookers thought fit to cover it with a sheet. At last Mirza Jainul-Abidin rescued the body, carried it on a bier and had it buried at Khusbag by the side of his grandfather, Ali Vardi Khan. At 25 all was over. At a hint from Mir Jafar Miran proposed marriage to Siraj's wife Lutfunnisa but she replied: "How could one who has been used to riding elephants now ride an ass?" Every evening upto the time of her death in 1790 she lit a lamp

on Siraj's grave and offered up a silent prayer from the depths of her heart. Men saw the lamp of love burning.<sup>58</sup>

(c) *The Plassey effect*

Sir J. N. Sarkar says that the Battle of Plassey "ended Muslim rule in Bengal; the foreign master of the sword had become its king-maker". It was Plassey that enabled Calcutta to become the Capital of British India. Mir Jafar consented to yield zemindari rights to the English, who became the King-maker. His deed demonstrated this by the insertion of a remarkable sentence: "Know this, ye zamindars and others settled in Bengal that ye are dependants of the Company and that ye must submit to such treatment as they give you, whether good or bad, and this is my express injunction".

After 1757 there grew up a State of Bengal administered by the Nawab with the military power in the hands of the Company. And the latter used it to help themselves to the revenue and to give their merchants a free run of the country's internal trade. The sponsored State became a plundered State. The Company's first dominion grew to become the basis for the later hegemony. It is this dominion of Bengal which is styled the "Company Bahadur", the popular honorific for the Company. Literally the expression means the variant or brave Company. Mir Jafar might be the nominal head of the government, but the real power behind the throne was Clive. After he had been appointed Governor of Bengal (27 June 1758-23 January, 1760) he quelled several insurrections against the Nawab's authority and defended him against external foes. The Nawab was in theory the deputy of a *roi tuteur*, the Mughal Emperor. The divorce of the *de facto* power from the *de jure* sovereignty was at this time the political fashion throughout India.<sup>59</sup>

#### IV. Towards a Capital City

The administration of the country went on under what was styled by Clive as "the masked system". This meant the adminis-

58. Chatterjee op. cit., 143-52; Majumdar op. cit., 111-12; Roberts op. cit., 145-47.

59. Spear op. cit., 85; Roberts op. cit., 141, 149.

tration of Bengal in the interests of the Company while maintaining the sovereignty of the Moghul.<sup>60</sup>

(a) *The growth of English dominion*

Between 1757 and 1760 the English secured valuable rights and privileges from Mir Jafar, whose subservience earned him the epithet of "Lord Clive's jackass". The Nawab was unable to pay the estimated amount of £ 12,50,000. Besides payments to the Company's officers, army and navy, Mir Jafar granted to Clive the *Zamindari* of 24-Parganas adjacent to Calcutta. The Company established a mint at Calcutta and secured the monopoly of the saltpetre trade in Behar. To these economic advantages were added political and military gains. Mir Jafar's treaty with the English (July 1757) contained two significant clauses. *First*, he declared, the enemies of the English, 'whether they be Indians or Europeans' would be his enemies. *Second*, he promised to pay the 'charge of maintenance' whenever he 'demanded the English (military) assistance'. Thus the English came to the help of the Nawab in warding off three invasions by Shah Alam II of Behar (1759-61). The British defeated the Dutch troops at Bedara, midway between Chinsurah and Chandernagore (November, 1759).

Clive was succeeded by Holwell (23 February—27 July 1760) in the management of the Company's affairs. Clive thought of removing Mir Jafar and even of assuming the 'sovereignty' for the Company. Holwell also favoured a change in the Nawabship because of his complicity with the Dutch and incapacity to suppress internal troubles. Vansittart (27 July 1760—3 December 1764), Holwell's successor took the final decision in September, 1760 when a treaty was signed with Mir Qasim, the son-in-law of Mir Jafar. And the latter was proclaimed the Nawab. It was provided that the Company's troops would 'assist' him 'in the management of all affairs' and the Nawab would assign to the Company the lands of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong. 'for all charges of the Company and of the said army and provisions for the field etc.' Moreover, the Company would take part in half of the *Chunam* trade of Sylhet.

60. Banerjee, A. C.—History of India (1974), 543-554.

Mir Qasim (1760-63) had to suffer humiliation at the hands of the English General Col. Coote, who used to send orders, specifying the persons to be appointed to high offices. Moreover, one day Watts entered into his private chamber close to the Zenana and shouted 'where is the Nawab'? All these were brought to the notice of the Governor on 17 June, 1761. The Company's servants carried on trade without paying duties. This was resisted by the Nawab, since he lost a large part of his revenue from duties. The source of the trouble lay in the conflict between the growing power of the Company and the effective exercise of authority by the Nawab. Mir Qasim had to fight battles with the English (1763-64). He was defeated in 4 successive battles—on the banks of the Ajoy, at Katwa, at Gheria and at Udhanala (1763). He made an alliance with Nawab Shuja-uddaulah and titular emperor Shah Alam II.

The allied army was defeated at Buxar on 22 October, 1764 and the coalition dissolved. The English lost 847 killed and wounded, while the enemy left behind them 2,000 dead. Mir Qasim became a fugitive till his life ended in misery at Delhi at 1777. Shah Alam came over to the English. Politically Buxar was more decisive than Plassey—Hector Munro's victory climaxed the process started with Clive's. And Buxar finally, rivetted the shackles of the Company's rule upon Bengal. According to James Stephen, Buxar deserves far more than Plassey to be considered as the origin of the British power in India. "It was not merely the Nawab of Bengal as at Plassey, but the Emperor of all India and his titular Prime Minister who were defeated." A direct consequence was the restoration of Mir Jafar (July, 1763), who promised to compensate the English for its losses caused by war with Mir Qasim. On Mir Jafar's death in 1765 his son Najmud-daulah became the Nawab, who concluded a treaty with the English (February, 1765). By this the Nawab agreed that he was to appoint a Minister nominated by the English and could not remove him without their approval. "By this agreement the long struggle between the English and the Nawab was brought to an end. The Nawab survived as a figure-head."

Clive in 1762 took his place in the Irish Peerage as Baron Clive of Plassey. He came to Bengal for the second time as Governor (3 May 1765—29 January, 1767). The authorities in London expected him "to set the errors that had been committed by his successors". It was his task to deal with the problems created by the English victory at Buxar, i.e., to determine the Company's future relations with Shah Alam and Shuja-ud-daulah. By the treaty of Allahabad (1765) Shuja-ud-daulah was restored to his dominions except Allahabad and Kora. Oudh was made a buffer State and he agreed to pay 50 lakhs of rupees to the Company for the expenses of the war. And Shah Alam was given Allahabad and Kora fetching a revenue of 28 lakhs of rupees to support him. Thus Plassey and Buxar "secured Bengal for England".

(b) *Dewani*

Clive secured from Shah Alam a *firman* (12 August, 1765), granting to the company the Dewani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This firman is shown in App. I. This grant vested in the Company complete control of the finances of the Bengal *Subhah*. Henceforward the Company's servants were to collect the revenues and defray the charges of government as well as to pay to the Nawab a fixed sum of 53 lakhs of rupees (reduced to 41 lakhs in 1766 and to 32 in 1769) and to the Emperor 26 lakhs. And the prophaeey of Clive in his letter written from Madras became fulfilled: "We must become *Nababs* in fact if not in name, perhaps totally so, without disguise".

The constitutional position of the E.I. Company vis-a-vis the Nawab was as follows. The Nawab or Subahdar of Bengal, as Viceroy of the Moghul Emperor, exercised two functions: (1) the *Dewani*, i.e. revenue and civil justice, (2) the *Nizamat*, i.e., military power and criminal justice. In February 1765 the Nawab had practically granted the *Nizamat* to the Company and in August 1765 the Emperor ceded to them the *Dewani*. The Company thus held the *Dewani* from the Emperor and the *Nizamat* from the Subh dar.<sup>62</sup> So, the Company became the *de facto* ruler of Bengal.

62. Ibid, 158-9

*(c) A virtual conquest of the country*

On September 30, 1765 Lord Clive flattered himself in a letter to the Court that he had revised the power of the Moghul: "By establishing the power of the Great Moghul we have likewise established his rights". The English did not aim at destroying the native powers. But they maintained only those native rulers who would nourish, and not crush, a peaceful English Company of merchants. It was a "masked system" under which the English step by step destroyed the military supremacy on which the Mahomedan power in Bengal depended. But at the same time they monopolized revenues for the maintenance of their own troops and garrisons. These stages may be indicated by reference to the treaties as shown below —

1. *Sirajuddaulah's treaty of February, 1757*—Art. 4 ran thus: "That the company be allowed to fortify Calcutta in such manner as they shall esteem proper for their defence, without any hindrance or obstruction"
2. *Mir Jafar's treaty of 15th July, 1757*—Art. 10 stated: "Whenever I demand the English assistance, I will be at the charge of the maintenance of them"
3. *Mir Qasim's treaty of 27th September, 1760*—Art. 5 read thus: "For all charges of the Company and of the said army and provisions for the field etc., the lands of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong shall be assigned etc."
4. *Mir Jafar's treaty of 10th July, 1763*—Art. 6 stated thus: "I shall maintain 12,000 horse and 12,000 foot in three provinces. If there should be occasion for any more, the number shall be increased by consent of the Governor and Council proportionally to the emergency. Besides, the forces of the English Company shall always attend me when they are wanted"
5. *Naim-ud-Daulah's treaty of February, 1765*—Art. 4 read thus: "I do confirm to the Company, as a fixed resource for defraying the ordinary expenses of their troops, the chucklas of Burdwan, Midnapore and Chittagong. I agree to pay 5 lakhs of sicca rupees per month for their maintenance. I esteem the Company's troops entirely equal (to) the defence of the provinces and as my own. I will only

maintain such as are absolutely necessary for the dignity of my person and government, and the business of my collections".<sup>63</sup>

It was said that the Company did not acquire any sovereign rights and their administration was within the Moghul constitution. This theory was of value for two reasons. *First*, it served to obviate jealousy on the part of the French in Bengal. *Second*, it afforded an answer to those who thought that British subjects could not acquire territories save for their sovereign. In this way the system of administering Bengal on the basis of the *Dewani* served as a stay to the interference of the ministers of the Crown with the affairs of the Company in Bengal. However, the English had *de facto* assumed the military supremacy in Bengal. And it is this transference of supreme military power which constituted a "virtual conquest" of the country.<sup>64</sup>

#### (d) *The "Great famine" of 1770*

Clive's "masked system" of government known as the dual or double government was given a trial under his two successors, Verelst (29 January 1767—24 December, 1769) and Cartier (24 December 1769—13 April, 1772). Verelst laid down his office without having conveyed to his masters any intimation of the impending famine. All through the stifling summer of 1770 the people went on dying. The husbandmen sold their cattle : they sold their sons and daughters, till at length no buyer of children could be found ; they ate the leaves of trees and the grass of the field ; and by June 1770 the living were feeding on the dead.<sup>65</sup> John Shore described this in his poetry thus—

Still fresh in memory's eye the scene I view,  
The shrivelled limbs, sunk eyes, and lifeless hue ;  
Still hear the mother's shrieks and infant's moans,  
Cries of despair and agonizing moans.

63. Aitchison, C. U.—Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads. Vol. I, 182-186, 215, 219-20, 224.

64. Firminger, op. cit., 19-21.

65. Petition of Md Ala Khan, Foudar of Purnea/Petitoin of Ujagar Mull, Amil of Jessore—Consultation of 28 April, 1770, I.O.R. : letter of June 2,—Consultations of 9 June, 1770, I.O.R.

In wild confusion dead and dying be ;—  
 Hark to the jackal's yell and vulture's cry,  
 The dog's fell howl, as midst the glare of day  
 They riot unmolested on their prey!<sup>66</sup>

Warren Hastings put down the loss of population due to the ravages of the famine as "at least one-third of the inhabitants of the province" in his letter written to the Court of Directors on 3 November, 1772.<sup>67</sup> Holwell estimated the population of the entire area within the Mahratta Ditch in 1752 to be 4,09,000. According to Grandpre this in 1789-90 came to 6,00,000. But A. K. Ray considers this to be a guess-work.<sup>68</sup> If the population had increased to 4½ lakhs during the two decades (1752-1770), the loss due to the Great Famine of 1770 might have been 1½ lakhs, i.e. one-third in Calcutta. The population might be fixed at about 3 lakhs after the famine on the basis of 10% increase.

#### (c) *Calcutta's growth*

(i) The building spree—The Company's experience of Siraj's attack on Calcutta made them wiser. They could realise the importance of a fort in a lonely place. If the fort be surrounded by human habitation, the latter might provide a shelter to the attackers to begin their assaults from these buildings. So the English took up the project of a new fort on a safe site at Govindpur to the south of the old fort and on the bank of the Hooghly. It was begun in October, 1757 and completed by 1773. Captain Brohier was assigned the task and he did little. His successor was a novice. Then 7 others followed. The delay was caused by the death of labourers. The fort was a symbol of the Company's military might and it proved superior to the Nawab's. Today it is the head quarters of the Eastern Wing of the Indian forces. The construction of the new fort led to displacement of a number of dwelling houses in its vicinity. The Indian settlers—the Setts and Bysacks were compelled to leave

66. *Memoir of the life and correspondence of John Lord Teignmouth, by his son* (1843), vol. 1, 25-6.

67. *Extracts from India office Records, Quoted in W. W. Hunter's Annals of Rural Bengal* (Reprint 1975), 381.

68. Ray *op. cit.*, 128, 134.



the place and settled in newer sites in the northern part of the town, for example, Ahiritola, Pathuriaghata, Jorasanko, Hatkhola and Sobhabazar. Of course, Kandarpa Ghoshal shifted to Kidderpore and founded the Bhukailash estate. The White town extended towards Chowringhee, Dharmatolla, and Bow-bazar, where buildings to accommodate the officials and merchants raised their heads. The *maidan* was denuded of its jungles and low-land. Splendid garden-houses in the suburbs became a fashion, following the Dutch habits.

Many massive buildings came into being. One is Beth Tep-hillah (House of prayer) better known as the Mission Church and it was completed in 1770 by John Zachary Kiernander (1711-99), the first Protestant Missionary of Bengal. The second was the Belvedere. It started as the country-seat of the Governor of Fort William in 1769-70 and was then leased out to Major Tolly in 1775. After passing through the ownership and occupation of the Commandar-in-Chief, Sir Edward Palet and the Advocate General, Charles Princep, it came in 1854 into the hands of the E.I. Company by way of sale. It then became the official residence of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. Now it houses the National Library. The Hastings House in Alipore was "a perfect bijouh" as called by Mrs. Fay and it remained the Governor-General's personal property till 1785, when it was sold off. This now serves as an Institute for women's education. A greater sense of security and prospect of gainful investment and employment led to the hectic growth in the craze for land and houses. Mrs. J. Kindersley visited India during 1765-68 and wrote as follows : "People keep constantly building and every one who can procure a piece of ground to build a house upon, consults his own taste and convenience without any regard to the beauty and regularity of the town. It looks as if all the houses had been thrown up in the air, and fallen down again by accident as they now stand."<sup>69</sup>

(ii) Nomenclature—In a judgment of Justice John Hyde of the Supreme Court in 1779 it appeared that "the new fort is considered within the town of Calcutta and Fort William, I consider to be the English name of the town. Calcutta is the Bengali name of one of many villages, of which the town of Calcutta consists".<sup>69</sup>

It is thus clear that Fort Willam was the first name given by the English and it was styled Calcutta by the natives in the Anglicised form from Kalkatah. During Siraj's occupation of Calcutta 'Alinagar' was the name given by him. After reoccupation the Company wrote to the Court of Directors in 1758 to omit this word "in the impression of *Siccas*". In other words, the old name of 'Calcutta' was to come into use.

(iii) *Restitution money*—This money was provided to compensate those whose property had been destroyed at the capture of Calcutta. It was to be distributed according to the nationality amongst the English, Portuguese, Natives, Armenians and Greeks and Commissioners were appointed by each nationality to adjudicate in individual claims. Then arose fierce disputes in the dog days of Calcutta : the black inhabitants made serious charges against their own Commissioners of taking the lion's share to themselves. The Natives received 20 lakhs of rupees. However, the Government stated : "As they neglected to secure the outskirts of the town when required to do it, or to lend any assistance in the defence of the place, they have forfeited all right and title to any restitution of the damages they have suffered."<sup>70</sup>

(iv) *Calcutta Civilians*—Young Civilians went by the name of writers, since they were mere clerks and had frequent wiggings from the Court regarding their "loose hand". Their copying was done in a hurry—generally it was unfit to be seen and many parts scarcely legible. The qualification for writership was stated to be that the applicant had been "regularly bred to writing, accounts, French and other accomplishments". However, there was a prejudice against entrusting the copying of confidential documents to black writers.

The Court of Directors passed many sumptuary laws to restrain extravagance in living on the basis of the maxim : 'Debt leads to dishonour'. Palanquins, horses or chaises were at first prohibited to writers going to office under pain of dismissal from office. However, they were afterwards allowed in the hot and rainy seasons. Lord Clive did something to check the spirit of luxury. Covenanted servants were ordered in 1754 "to attend

70. Proceedings, January 20, 1757 : Long—Unpublished records of the Govt. (1973). Introduction, xxxi-xxxii, no. 231 at 115.

office from 9 to 12 in the morning, and in the afternoon when occasion be". They were enjoined a more frugal living, indispensable for early hours at office. An early ride at day-break, breakfast at 8, office from 9 to 12, dinner at 2, sleep, tea, ride, visiting and supper filled up the day in that period.<sup>71</sup>

(v) Language and Currency—Persian in Bengal was the language of business in every department and continued as the language of the courts even down to 1835. In 1758 the Court of Directors ordered two Bengali Civilians to be sent every year via Bombay to Bussora to study Persian and after acquiring it return to Bengal.

The original payments in cowries had been a cumbrous way of exchange. In 1753 Captain Cook refused to take cowries on board, though the Court had directed that 10 tons of cowries were to be laden on each of the ships homeward bound. He alleged the loss by pilferage and the loss of weight at the time of clearance. In 1758 the heads of offices were to indent on the Buxey for their requirements. As late as 1767 the revenues of Sylhet were paid in cowries. This deficiency in coin was to be remedied by a mint at Calcutta, but it was opposed by the Nawab and Jagat Sett, because their profits drawn from the Mint at Murshidabad would be lost<sup>72</sup>

(vi) Sanitation of Calcutta—The mortality of Calcutta was fearful in the early years. Hamilton, the traveller stated that 1200 Europeans died in one year. There was a hospital, in Calcutta, "which many entered, but few came out to give an account of their treatment". In the Persian documents Calcutta was called "the paradise of nations", but the Moghuls made it a Siberia and sent exiled criminals to its pestiferous swamps.

The work of sanitation was simple when Calcutta had, as a boundary, the jail at Lal Bazar, leading to what was called the Continent, i.e., the land beyond the Mahratta Ditch. There was no Chowringhee then and its plains formed a jungle for the tigers to live in. Because of this a few sum of rupees was granted in 1749 "to make the drains sweet and wholesome". In 1751 the jungle near Calcutta was ordered to be burnt down—it was to

71. Long, *op. cit.*, Introduction, xxxii-xxxiii.

72. *Ibid.*, xxxiv, XLVII.

be used for burning bricks. People used to wash themselves and the horses. As a result it became so offensive that it became impossible to pass by it either northward or southward. And in 1755 complaints were made of it. Troops could not be landed in Calcutta. Lord Clive himself in 1757 could not bring the forces into Calcutta on account of its unhealthiness. In 1762 an order was issued to clear the town of jungles. The ditch to the east of the fort containing the bodies of those who perished in the Black Hole, was filled up in 1766, since it had become a receptacle for garbage and filth.<sup>73</sup>

(f) *Calcutta as a Capital City*

Calcutta is the sixth Capital of Bengal within the last six centuries. Gour was the first ancient capital situated on a deserted channel of the Ganges in the district of Maldah. Its latitude was 24°52' North and longitude 88°10' East. The origin of the city is lost in obscurity. The city with its suburbs covered an area of about 20 to 30 square miles. Tradition has it that 30,000 betel shops were daily opened for the supply of the delicate aromatic plants to its inhabitants. It was also known by Lakshmanabati. The Mahomedans called it Jenatabad as is evident from Abul Fazle's description. The second capital was Nuddea, called the 'Oxford of Bengal'. His court was adorned by two great poets, namely, Jayadeva, the author of the famous lyric *Gita Govindam* and Dhoyi, the author of *Pavandutam* as well as by the Hindu jurist Halayudha. Lakshmansena was having a midday meal when Malik Iktiyar-ud-din Muhammad Khalji captured the capital in 1197-98. The third capital was Rajmahal founded by Man Sinha when he was appointed Governor of Bengal. This founding took place on November 7, 1595 and was named Akbarnagar. It stood on the west bank of the Ganges in 25°2' 25" North latitude and 87°52' 51" East longitude. The city became flourishing within a short time.

The fourth capital was Dacca. Islam Khan was appointed Governor of Bengal in 1606 and he raised it to the capital of Bengal in 1608. It was situated on the Buriganga which connected the Brahmaputra and the Ganges (Padma). It was named Jahangirnagar in honour of the reigning Moghul Emperor. It is

stated by Walter Hamilton in his Gazetteer : "During the government of the Viceroy, Shaista Khan, rice was so cheap at Dacca that 640 pounds might he had for one rupee. To commenorate this event, as he was leaving Dacca in 1689, he ordered the western gate to be built up and an inscription placed thereon, forbidding any future Governor to open it until he had reduced the price to as cheap a rate. In consequence of this injunction it remained shut until the Government of Serferaz Khan in 1739".

Murshidabad was the fifth capital and the "residence" of Murshid Quli Jafar Khan. It was foudned in 1704 as the head quarters of the *Dewan* since Jafar Khan was then the *Dewan*. Afterwards, he became a Subahdar and consequently Murshidabad became the capital of Bengal. It continued to be so till 1772, when Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India removed the seat of administration to Calcutta. And thereafter Calcutta became the sixth capital of Bengal.<sup>74</sup>

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ENGLISH ZAMINDAR

It was the day when in a corner of the commodity market  
Of bordering Bengal  
The goddess of commerce brought in royal throne thro' a path  
Of deep-dark tunnel.  
Vanga did consecrate it with her own Gangetic waters  
And in hush crowned it ;  
The trader's measuring rod showed as a royal sceptre  
With the passing of night.

—R. N. Tagore, 'The Sivaji festival', *Anthology*, 447-8

The expression 'Calcutta Collectorate' contains two words—Calcutta and Collectorate. The first relates to the territory, while the second to its administrator, the Collector. And an account of these two is given below :

#### (a) *Calcutta defined*

(i) The accretion of areas—The most lasting thing achieved by the English Company in the period 1690-1757 was not the building of a fortress, but the acquisition in 1698 of the nature, on terms of the Moghul revenue law, of the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindpur. By this acquisition the Company obtained for the first time a legal position within the Moghul Empire. This brought into existence a 'working theory' by which the acceptance of the Dewani in 1765 became the final and logical completion.<sup>1</sup> The consultations of 7 March, 1698 show that in seeking to have the three villages the English met with opposition on the part of "the Jimidar (Zamindar) of the country". The Company was willing to pay one-fourth more than the usual rent. However, the Zamindar raised "frivolous and idle objections". He would not let the Company have any part of the country in its "name", but "might have it in any of the natives' names". The reason was that the place would be wholly

1. Firminger, op. cit., 78.

lost to him because the Company would be a powerful transferee and could not gain possession of it in case of necessity. But in the case of a native transferee he could have the land at his pleasure. So, the Company thought of having the three towns from the Prince Azim-ush-Shan, Aurangzeb's grandson and Subahdar. Accordingly Walsh was sent to his Durbar. The Prince agreed to give the Company the Zamindarship of the three towns. It was agreed that the Company would pay Rs. 1500 to the Zamindars and the latter would relinquish their titles in favour of the Company. And this is evident from the consultations dated October 31, 1698. But the actual "Nishan" by Azim-ush-Shan has been lost.<sup>2</sup> The "Jimindar" of the records were the family of the Savarna Majumdars (Roy Chowdhuris). A. K. Roy has stated in his *Short History of Calcutta* (1902 at p. 47) that the zamindars had "pro-English sympathies" and for this they faced "troubles". But these are not supported by the records of consultations. In fact, the three Towns belonged to the Moghul Khalsa or territories directly assumed by the Imperial exchequer and had been granted to the Subahdar of Bengal as part of his *jagir*. The word *Jagir* is derived from jai=place ; gir=taking. It is a Persian word meaning literally 'place-holding'. It means a hereditary assignment of land and of its rent as annuity (*Hobson-Jobson*, 446). This being the case, it was in the Subahdar to entrust the farming of the revenues to whomsoever he pleased. According to Wilson, the Company's payment of Rs. 1300 to the Majumdars was "for the sake of peace and quiet". The Company as already noted was made responsible for, the payment of Rs. 1194—14 as—11 pies as "revenue".<sup>3</sup> The *Bainama* or deed of purchase (App. B) from the Majumdars, dt. November 9, 1698 is preserved at the British Museum (Addit, MSS No. 24,039). The copy given is the translation made by W. Irvine.

The next landmark was the Emperor Farrukshiyar's *Firman* (App. D) of December 30, 1716. It confirmed the purchase of zamindari rights in the three towns, and sanctioned the purchase of similar rights in the 38 towns (App. E) and granted 40 bighas of land "in any place they may have a mind to settle factories". On November 16, 1717 the Governor and Council proceeded in

2. Wilson : *Old Fort William in Bengal*, vol. I, 34-5, 39-48.

3. Firminger, op. cit., 81.

state to Tribeni above the Hooghly to receive the *firman*. But the Nawab was strong enough to prevent the Company from realising the principal objects for which the Imperial *firman* was obtained by the Surman Embassy. The effect may be summed up in the words of Wilson thus :

"In Bengal it placed the local government technically in the wrong so long as the *firman* and orders of the Emperor were disregarded, and consequently it furnished the English with a standing quarrel which they might take up at any time. This they at last did after the catastrophe of the Black Hole, and the withholding of the rights won by Surman was the ground put forward by Clive, when he broke with Siraj-ud-daulah and entered upon the conquest of the country. The *soldier* completed and more than completed what the *ambassador* began".<sup>4</sup>

The Nawab was more or less independent of the Emperor since Aurangzeb's death in 1707. He forbade the zamindars through his agents to sell their rights to the Company. The English thus felt justified, on the strength of their *firman* in defeating the Subahdar's intentions when they found their bonafide attempts in exercising the rights conferred by the Emperor thwarted by the Nawab's machinations. They got possession of the villages, not directly by force and violence, but indirectly through their servants and adherents.<sup>5</sup> Some documents of the old zamindars show how the Company's servants got possession of some of the 38 villages (App. E) and thereby frustrated the Nawab's prohibitory orders.<sup>6</sup> Some of the brokers and servants of the Company or their dependants managed to obtain possession of some villages through a new device. They realised rents and profits and omitted to pay the Government revenue, which was exacted from the old dispossessed zamindars. The latter in difficult cases abandoned their zamindaris and inducted others. On the other hand,

4. Wilson, C. R.—"Diary of M/s Surman and Stephenson", in *The Early annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol II, Part II, *Introductory Account*, LXIX.

5. Bolts, H—*Considerations on Indian affairs* (1772), App. 1, footnote.

6. Beverley, H—*Report on the census of Calcutta* (1876), paras 94 and 98 at 32-3.



the dispossessed zemindars whenever they found that they had a chance of recovering their estates, appealed to the Imperial authorities. Some of them acknowledged the trespassers as talukdars under them and assigned the charge of payment of government revenue to these talukdars. However, they were not permitted to sell their taluks. In case the talukdars sold their taluks to the English, the latter took possession but could not pay the government revenues in the teeth of the Nawab's orders. When the revenue was exacted from the zemindars, they repudiated the talukdars on the ground of the sale being invalid and induced the Hooghly officials to issue proclamations accordingly. The idea was to prevent the English from acquiring territory. And the result was that between 1717 and 1756 the revenues of the villages occupied by the English portegees got unsettled inspite of Jaffar Ali's revised settlement of 1722. The old zemindars failed to collect rent despite the efforts of the Nawab and his officials to keep them in possession. And the estates passed into various hands. Thus the Setts of Calcutta and some other influential men became the proprietors of several villages. This may be illustrated by the cases of Simla and Balliaghata.<sup>7</sup> In 1754 Holwell obtained a *patta* of Simla for Rs. 2281 from Nawaj Malik and Rashid Molik and took possession of it. A complaint was lodged with the Imperial Court in 1747 by Nanda Lal, a descendant of Lakshmikanta Majumdar of the Savarna family against Nawaji Malik and Rashbehari Sett for having obtained unlawful possession of Simla and Balliaghata respectively.<sup>8</sup>

However, the English had never been slack in their efforts to obtain a legal title to their landed possession. To this end the incentive came from the sudden influx into the Settlement of a very large population owing to the Mahratta invasion under Bhaskar Pandit and the capture of Hooghly by his ally, Mir Habeeb in 1742. Most of the old, high caste native residents of Calcutta trace the immigration of their families to this. But the Company's desire to have their rights and privileges could not be fulfilled till Clive's arrival in 1757 and the recapture of Calcutta. On February 9, 1757 the English compelled Siraj-ud-daulah to agree by treaty with the zemindars to give them the 38 villages co-

7. Holwell, J. Z.—*Tracts* (3rd edn.).

8. A. K. Ray, *op. cit.*, 52.

vered by the Imperial Firman of 1717, some of which had already been in their possession. In the next year 1758 they acquired by treaty with the Subahdar, Jaffar Ali Khan, not only the tracts of land held by other zemindars "within the ditch which surrounded the borders of Calcutta", but only 600 yards without, in addition to the zemindari lands south of Calcutta as far as Kulpi. Besides, 20½ mouzas in immediate proximity to the factory were granted revenue-free to the English with the zemindari of the 24-Parganas. The revenue-free grant comprised all the lands of Calcutta, west of the Marhatta Ditch and also a considerable part of the suburbs on the east of it. About the beginning of December, 1758 the English obtained from Mir Jaffar the sanads of the "free tenure" of the town of Calcutta and of the zemindari of the 24-Parganas and from the Emperor a confirmation thereof (Appendices I/J). This was in consequences of the *Fird Sawal*, i.e., petition endorsed on the sanad and it related to mouzas 20½ and mahals (Markets) 2 with rents amounting to Rs. 8,836—4—3—2. The sanad directed that "rents of the aforesaid mouzas etc. which adjoin to the factory are forgiven to the end that they provide for the defence of their factory and the safeguard of the seaports therein".

The Marhatta scare of 1742 drove a large part of the population of the districts on the west bank of the Hooghly into the area available around the town, protected the English Fort. This led to the rapid clearing of jungles and the extension of the "town" to the suburban areas consisting of mouzas such as Hogulkuria, Simlah, Tuntuneah, Arcooly, Mirzapur, Mullunga, Dingabhangra, Colinga, Taltolah, Birjee and Oltadanga in addition to Govindpur and portions of Sootalooty and Dhee Calcutta that were not urban. Between 1742 and 1753 there was a rapid increase of native Indian houses—Kutchra and Pucca—mostly Kutchra in the outlying parts of the European town within the Marhatta Ditch. 3,650 bighas were found in Simlah, Molunga, Hogulkuria and Mirzapur belonging to independent proprietors. Dhee Calcutta included certain outlying villages beyond the Marhatta Ditch, namely, Baniapukur, Puggladanga, Tengra and Dolond which were rented from the zemindars at the rate of Rs. 1 per bigha from 1746 and collectively known as John Nagore. The ground within the town consisted of 5,472½ bighas paying ground rent at the rate of three rupees *sicco* per bigha per annum and

733 bighas rent-free. Of this 310 bighas were occupied by the Company and the remainder by churches, mosques, temples, tanks, and Brahmottar lands, i.e., lands given to Brahmans.

In his *Parochiel Annals of Bengal* and *Parish of Bengal* Hyde refers to a plan to a scale of 4" to a mile of the territory of Calcutta in 1742 found in Upjohn's map of 1793 for Calcutta and its environs. Therein the "town of Calcutta" is distinguished from its adjacent mouzas and the Christian population—English, Armenian, Portuguese, and others—was completely fenced by palisades during the Marhatta scare. A second barrier was provided by the Marhatta ditch, protecting the native population. The railing within these fences still remains in such streets as Fancy Lane, Larkins Lane, British Indian Street, Mango Lane, Ezra Street, Portuguese Church Lane, Armenian Street etc. According to Hyde, "the original town of Calcutta was at one time at least a 'fenced city' (consisting of) 220 acres (150 acres in the map)". There was a creek now reclaimed by the name of Hastings Street. Every road issuing from the town was secured by a gate. The creek in those days crept eastwards beneath three gated bridges until the fences turned townwards at Fancy Lane, derived from the Native *Phansi*. The first bridge opened from the burying place near Charnock's mausoleum; the second from the spacious yard containing the bell-shaped magazine of masonry and gun-powder protected by the sentries; and the third swerved from the natural boundary of the creek. In the third case people avoided the gallows-tree.

The history of the towns is as old as that of the town. Nawab Mir Jafir paid in 1757 a sum of one crore and 70 lakhs of rupees as restitution money to meet the damages done by Siraj-ud-Daulah during the seige. The reconstruction of the town began with the distribution of this money. The fort was shifted into Govindpur, where it was erected on a grand scale. So, the limits of the town soon extended beyond the Marhatta Ditch. As noted some of the "out-towns" had already been included within the town for revenue purposes. Hence, one of the first steps taken by the Company on the acquisition of their landed properties was according to Holwell, "to annex a considerable tract of land taken from the 24-Parganas adjoining to Calcutta in order to extend its bounds". This tract lying outside the Ditch made up 15 *dihis* or homestead lands raised above the level of the surrounding

country. It comprised 55 mouzas or *grams* and as such was called *Panchannagram*. These were called "suburbs" (App. L). The 15 *dihis* paid the annual revenue between 1765 and 1767 as follows : (1) Dihi Sinthee—Rs. 1,958-13-5 ; (2) Dihi Chitpore—Rs. 9191-9 ; (3) Dihi Dakhin Paikpara—Rs. 2,046-3 ; (4) Dihi Bagzolla—Rs. 307-13-3 ; (5) Dihi Ooltadanga—Rs. 2,424-13 ; (6) Dihi Sealdah—nil ; (7) Dihi Cooliah—Rs. 1,896-1-9 ; (8) Dihi Soorah—Rs. 2,110-13-9 ; (9) Dihi Entally—Rs. 2,263-4-6 ; (10) Dihi Topseah—Rs. 2,302-9 ; (11) Dihi Birji—Rs. 2,815-10 ; (12) Dihi Serampore—Rs. 1,430-15-5 ; (13) Dihi Manoharpur—Rs. 1,669-6-6 ; (14) Dihi Chukraber—nil ; and (15) Dihi Bhawanipur—Rs. 1,529-12-10.<sup>9</sup>

At last by the Proclamation of 1794 the Governor-General in Council fixed the boundary of the town as the inner side of the Marhatta Ditch. (App. M).

(ii) Company's legal title—It may be argued that the Nawab of Murshidabad was, technically the Viceroy of the Emperor at Delhi. And it is the bounden duty of the Nawab to maintain intact the jagirs and zamiadaries granted by the Emperor. Under such a constitutional position the Nawab's grant was *ultra vires* until sanctioned by the Emperor. *Secondly*, there are lawyers who hold that even the grant of *Dewani* to the English in 1765 was not sufficient to invest the English with the property of the soil. *Thirdly*, others assert that the absolute ownership of the land possessed by the English was not acquired by them *till* 1858 when the Crown took over the administration of India from the company. These questions may be best answered in the light of discussions held by experts like William Hunter and Millet. \*

According to Hunter, the legal object of various Charters was to confer on the Company the *Khidmat* or official duties and powers of an Indian Zamindar over the 24-Parganas. However, the grants did not confer the full proprietary lordship in the soil. This difficulty had been removed on July 13, 1759 by a *Jagir Sanad* granted to Lord Clive for services rendered to the Delhi Emperor in suppressing the rebellion led by his eldest son, Shah Alam. By this deed all the royalties, dues and rents collected by

the Company as official landholder and paid into the public treasury were made over to Lord Clive. This made the Company a subordinate to its own servant. Clive's claim to the property as a feudal suzerin was contested in 1764 in England. On his return to Bengal a new deed was issued on June 23, 1765 : it confirmed the unconditional jagir to Clive for 10 years with reversion thereafter to the Company in perpetuity. The land in 24-Parganas was assessed at Rs. 2,22,958. But the position of the city of Calcutta with its port was different. The Company obtained possession of 3 villages corresponding to the city of Calcutta in return for a present of Rs. 16,000 to Aurangzeb's son in 1698. In 1717 during Farrukhsiyar's reign it acquired a formal grant, but only in the nature of a talukdari or copyhold tenure, subject to an annual rental of Rs. 1281-6-9 prior to 1757 for the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindpur. In February, 1757 it was fixed at Rs. 8,836 for the whole of the villages made over to the Company by a treaty. The surplus revenue realised from the talukdars over and above the fixed rental amounted to Rs. 98,295. Prior to 1757 the gross revenue amounted to Rs. 1,07,131. In December, 1758 the Company finally obtained a *lakhiraj* or rent-free grant under the royal authority.<sup>10</sup>

Millet is of opinion that prior to February 1757 the Company held the 3 villages above-mentioned as zamindar, paying Rs. 1281-6-9 as annual revenue to the Government. And by the Treaty of 9 February, 1757 they obtained possession of other villages within the Mahratta Ditch, paying for the whole zamindari of Calcutta an annual revenue of Rs. 8,836. However, by the Treaty of June 1757 they obtained a *sanad* exempting them from the said payment with effect from December 1758 so that it might be applied for the defence of their factory. Rs. 3 per bigha was permitted by the laws of the Empire to be levied on the under-tenants by the Company as the maximum rent. At present in the case of sale of government lands, the usual rent of *sicca* Rs. 3 or Company's Rs. 3-3-3 is reserved. But when they are let out, they go to the highest bidder—sometimes the rate is as high as Rs. 60 per cottah or Rs. 720 per bigha per annum. In this context, the Company while obtaining the government of the country stands in respect of Calcutta in "the twofold relation of Zamindar and Governor" and

as such are entitled both to the Zamindar's and the Governor's share of the produce of the land. This applies to "khas mahals" that have become the property of government either from failure of heirs or by purchase. There are under-tenures in some zamindari, held at fixed rent and they are heritable and transferable. For building purposes there are perpetual leases. The Coomar (Khamar) or waste lands of Calcutta were the absolute property of the Company and they were sold, granted or let for building or other purposes.<sup>11</sup>

It may be noted here that the Company's dominion in India became a distinct state, both Indian and English, for which it may be styled 'Company Bahadur'. The new State was in fact in the framework of the Indian tradition. It had little in common with English institutions—the checks and balances were cast aside. A constitutional Governor became an absolute Governor-General, subordinate to London. But London was far off. His position resembled that of a Bengal *Subahdar*, enjoying a large liberty of action. Both were foreign essentially in personnel and culture. Both governments were police States or more politely, law and order States.<sup>12</sup>

#### (b) *The Company as a Zamindar*

The Europeans liked this country because it was possible for them to shake the pagoda tree here. They had thus a proverb in common use among them: "The Kingdom of *Bengal* has a hundred gates open for entrance, but not one for departure". The English got entry into Calcutta through the gate of Zamindari, or properly talukdari by way of *Bainama* (App. B). In strict parlance a zamindar is superior to a talukdar. However, the two terms are popularly used to mean the same thing, namely, a landholder realising rent from his tenants and paying revenue to Government. The word 'Zamindar' comes from the Persian and means 'landholder'—one holding land on which he pays revenue to the Government direct. The term 'taluk' comes from Arabic 'ta'al-luk' derived from the root 'alak', meaning 'to hang or depend'. In Bengal it is applied to tracts of proprietary land, some-

11. A. K. Ray, *op. cit.*, App. VI, 81-4.

12. Spear, *op. cit.*, 93, 99-100.

times not easily distinguished from *zamindaries* and sometimes subordinate to or dependent on zamindars.<sup>13</sup>

(i) Zamindar and Zamindari—By 1582 Todar Mal made the standard assessment of land-revenue of Bengal and this was known for many generations as *Asal Jumma Tumar*. This revenue-roll amounted to a total of Rs. 1,06,93,152<sup>14</sup> Rents were collected from the ryots with the help of qanungoes that had been in existence prior to the Moghul advent. But under the new dispensation this office became the pivot of land-revenue administration. Todar Mal's settlement in Bengal was made with zamindars and the *qanun* or custom was a thing best known to the qanungoes. Once a Roy Royan (principal officer of the *khalsa* or revenue department) was asked : "What is a zamindar and what is a zamindari?" He gave the answer thus : "A *zamindar* is a person possessing hereditarily on the conditions of obedience to the ordinances of government a tract of land under the denomination of a *pargana* or *chakla* subject to the payment of revenue. A *zamindari* is that kind of land registered in the records of government in the name of such a person".<sup>15</sup> John Shore, a great expert on the land-revenue system in Bengal explains in one of his Minutes the relation of a zamindar to government and to a ryot as follows : "The relation of a zamindar to government and of a ryot to a zamindar is neither that of a proprietor nor a vassal but a compound of both. The former performs acts of authority unconnected with property rights. The latter has rights without real property and the property of the one and the rights of the other are in a measure held at discretion".<sup>16</sup>

The zamindar was responsible for (1) the payment of land-revenue, and (2) the maintenance of order and peace. He was to receive *rasum* and *nancar*. *Rasum* or perquisites varied. A share of *Sair* (inland customs, tolls etc.) duties and deductions from collections on the net receipts of land-revenue formed *rasum*. *Nancar* or subsistence allowance was usually an assignment of land. The statements such as "increase the productivity

13. Hobson—Jobson, 894, 980.

14. Fifth Report, Vol. II, App. I.

15. Governor-General in Council—Revenue Proceedings, vol. 128, 2nd April, App.

16. Shore's Minute dated December 21, 1789.

of parganas", "keep the ryots satisfied by good behaviour" are the directive principles of the Mughal Emperor issued to guide the conduct of the zamindar. In riverine Bengal it was the duty of the zamindar to secure the lands from inundation by repairing the embankments of rivers. And the zamindari agency was found suitable for this *poolbundy*.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, it was an ancient usage to make zamindars responsible for robberies committed in their lands. They were magistrates in the ordinary detail of justice and responsible for the peace of their respective zamindaries. They were also accountable for the good behaviour of every individual residing 3 days in a village of the zamindari. A considerable degree of jurisdiction was thus inherent in this responsibility.<sup>18</sup> In the zamindari of Burdwan there was under a zamindar a Buxy who had to produce either the goods or thieves within a fixed time or to compensate the sufferer according to his *muchulka* or engagement. Under the Buxy were the *thanadars* or *foujdars* who were *chakran* (lands allotted for their maintenance) servants of the zamindar. On the system of coupling responsibility with the possession of land the Governor-General in Council commented thus: "The idea of attaching responsibility to the possession of land originated, from a retrospect of the system of police established in Bengal during the prevalence of Mussalman power and as success is the criterion by which political arrangements are commonly estimated, the system having served to preserve order at a period when it had full operation was doubtless worthy of adoption where a change of circumstances had not taken place."<sup>19</sup> But a change of circumstances had taken place with the advent of the English and the break-down of the Mughal administration. Hence, the system could not be ultimately revived.

On the nature of zamindari inheritance the Revenue Board consisting of the whole Council consulted Md. Reza Khan, Naib Nazim and Naib Dewan and the opinion was as follows. Zamindaris were of 5 kinds. The first kind was of the pre-Muslim period and it continued on the proprietary acknowledging the subjection of the emperor and paying rent. The second was

17. Committee of Revenue, Calcutta dated May 12, 1783.

18. Court's Separate General Letter dt. April, 12, 1786 at 59.

19. G.G. in General Revenue vol. 92.



known as the jungleburs since the zamindars cleared off jungles and cultivated them. The third originated with purchase, while the fourth with free grants. And the fifth was called *sanady*. Also it had 5 varieties. The first variety came into existence on the conversion of the waste land into a cultivated one and payment of rent to government. The second came into being when a zamindar was turned out by the King or Magistrate and was given by a *sanad* to another. The third related to the sanad being issued to a person on the representation that the original zamindar had died without heirs; he would hold the *zamindari* till the proper heirs would appear. The fourth came into being when the principal zamindar usurped the small zamindars and applied to the King or the Magistrate for a *sanad* and got it for a *nazarana*. And the fifth related to a zamindar dying without heirs and leaving the *zamindari khas* and the King granting it to another for a *nazarana*. In regard to the first, second, third and fourth kinds as well as the first variety of the fifth kind, the zamindar was the sole proprietor and master and the King had no further concern except the receipt of rents.<sup>20</sup>

In this context, it may be noted that the three villages—Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindpur—were comprised in the *zamindari* of Krishnagar (Nadia). This came under the first kind. An annual payment of *malikana* was allowed to the *Raja*. And this represented the purchase-money of Rs. 1194 as 14 paise 5 as revenue per annum.<sup>21</sup>

(ii) *The Company's administration*—The East India Company appointed one of its members of the Council in Calcutta to be its zamindar, who was to exercise his powers. It is the democratic tradition of the English that the Company had its Agent and Council. This Agent became President and subsequently Governor. The commercial term 'Agent' outlined the growth of the empire: it was applied to the representatives of the Victory at the courts of Native Princes. All ranks, excepting that of soldiers and officers in the garrison were expressed in business terms. The Company's servants were divided into 4 grades of writers,

20. Proceedings of the Revenue Board, vol. V; N. K. Sinha's *The Economic History of Bengal*, vol. II (1968), Chap. I, 1-20.

21. Gupta, M. N.—*Land System of Bengal* (1940), 110 note.

factors, junior merchants and senior merchants. The Governor was originally known as the 'Agent' of the Court of Directors. He presided over a Council of 10 or 12 members. Some were absent from Calcutta—they served as chiefs of inland factories at Dacca, Cossimbazar and Patna. Those at Calcutta formed a Board with the Governor as President. Salaries were absurdly low; they were only fractions of the real income. The Company's servants traded on their own account in the eastern seas. They derived large perquisites, such as commissions and presents, from native merchants and contractors. They began to live in a liberal style. At this the Directors in England grew angry and suspicious. Hence, strict orders were issued against extravagance.

The Calcutta life of the English was all of the business type. They bought, they sold, they overlooked, they kept accounts, they wrote letters, they regulated establishments and expenditure. Large ships from Europe brought woollen goods, cutlery, iron, copper and quicksilver. The same ships carried away cotton piece goods, fine muslins, silks, indigo, spices and Indian varieties. Smaller ships chartered by the Company's servants were sent to different ports in the eastern seas as private adventures. Public auctions or outcries were held for the sale of goods—buying and selling at outcry was one of the excitements of Calcutta life. European commodities were despatched to remote factories, while native manufactures were received in return. The sale of European commodities was never on an extensive scale. On the other hand, the export of Indian commodities and manufactures for the home markets was greater than ever. In other words, exports were greater than imports and this brought in more monies from outside. And the country enjoyed a favourable balance of trade. Indian cotton and muslin were in great demand in the British Isles. At a later period Manchester began to appear as a formidable rival to Bengal.

The English settlement at Calcutta showed remarkable growth of population during the first half of the 18th century. The population was estimated in 1704 at 1500; it rose to 31,000 in 1712, and to more than 1,00,000 by 1750. In the words of Salimullah:

"The mild and equitable conduct of the English in their settlement gained them the confidence and esteem of the

natives ; which joined to the consideration of the privileges and immunities which the Company enjoyed, induced numbers to remove thither with their families ; so that in a short time Calcutta became an extensive and populous city.”<sup>22</sup>

Step by step the English proceeded towards territorial sovereignty in Bengal and the rest of the country. The secret treaty (3 June, 1757), with Mir Jafar “turned the Subahdar of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa into a mediatized Indian ruler, subject to British control, exactly of the type created by the subsidiary alliance system ascribed to Wellesley”. This observation of Sir Jadunath Sarkar correctly represents the then state of affairs. In other words, the Company became the “English Nawab”.<sup>23</sup>

The “Company Bahadur” or the “English Nawab” as the hybrid of Moghul and English terms used to denote the new Anglo-Indian State, followed two kinds of rules. In regard to the English population the administration of justice followed the English form. There was the Mayor’s Court consisting of a Mayor and 9 Aldermen. It decided all civil cases subject to an appeal to the Governor and Council. The quarter sessions tried all criminal cases. With regard to the natives, the Moghul forms were followed. A servant of the Company performed the conflicting duties—revenue and judicial—under the rules of the Moghul Government. A quit-rent of Rs. 3 was realised from the native occupants of the Company’s lands. There were town and other duties as well. Many of the duties were collected in cowries, and many bazar transactions made in cowries. A rupee was generally valued at shillings sterling—it was equivalent to 16 annas, while an anna to about 3½ pence and to about 300 cowries. A small handful of rice could be had for 20 or 30 cowries. The English Nawab collected the ground rents from the tenants, paid revenue to the Moghul exchequer, administered justice among the native population, looked after the police and municipal affairs of the area and collected all ‘sair’ or internal duties.<sup>24</sup> And for

22. Sarkar, J. N. (ed.)—History of Bengal, vol. II (1948)—Salimullah’s work in Persian *Tarikhi Bengala* was written in 1763-4 at the instance of Vansittart, Governor of Bengal.

23. Ibid, 486.

24. Wheeler, J. T.—Early Records of British India (1878, 2nd edn. 1879).

the purposes of administration, the Town Calcutta was divided in 1752, according to Holwell, the zamindar, into 4 districts : (1) Dhee Calcutta ; (2) Govindpore ; (3) Sootanuttee ; (4) Bazar Calcutta. Dhee Calcutta included some outlying villages beyond the Mahratta Ditch, namely, Baniapookur, Puggladanga, Tengra and Dolland, which were rented from the zamindars at the rate of Re. 1 per bigha from 1746 and collectively known as John Nagore. Moreover, the account of the Calcutta zamindari was prepared at the time, as is evident from Holwell's report to the Court of Directors, under 3 heads thus : (i) Ground rents (ii) Farms of bazars and hats ; (iii) Miscellaneous or town duties.<sup>25</sup> At present there are two divisions—North and South.

(c) *The collection of ground rents*

(i) *Grounds, not defined*—The term 'ground rent' in the U.K. is defined by Jowitt as "rent reserved on a lease by a lessor, usually for a long term of years, to a lessee who may use or dispose of the land by sale or lease at its value during the term subject to the ground rent ; it generally takes the form of rent payable for land let on a building lease on which the lessee erects buildings, which at the termination of the lease become, together with the land, the property of the lessor."<sup>26</sup> In the USA the word means "rent paid to owner of land for use of property ; normally to construct building on such. Generally, rent is paid for a long-term lease (e.g., 99-year lease) with lessor retaining title to land. Such long-term lease is commonly renewable. Office buildings, hotels, and similar large structures in cities are commonly built on land under such types of ground leases".<sup>27</sup>

In this context may be seen the definition of H.S. Oldfield, Collector of Calcutta given in 1836 : "In this Collectorship there is a species of revenue raised on Government lands let on building and other leases, and it is called *ground rent*, for the collection of which persons are appointed whose emoluments are derived from a commission of 3 per centum on the amount collected".

25. Sterndale, *op. cit.*, 8.

26. Jowitt's Dictionary of English law (2nd edn. 1977), 875 ; Bartlett v. Salmon (1856), 6 De G.M. & G. 33.

27. Black's Law Dictionary (5th edn. 1979), 633.

(ii). *The collection procedure*—The Chief Collecting Officer, named Collector had under him a number of collecting agents. To enable them to make their collections the Collector furnishes them with a printed form under his “seal and signature”, which was then called bill. These bills were made out according to a register called the “Terij Bhane”. It may be noted that Register A contains the names and numbers of the holdings in the Town Calcutta under the lakhiraj grant and Register B is comprised of all redeemed holdings recognised as valid *lakhiraj*, while in regulation districts it contained all revenue-free estates. Register D relates to mutation and is maintained for mutation of names and addresses of owners of holdings. They are treated as proprietors of estates for certain purposes, though they are not proprietors in the strict legal sense. Richmond Thackeray (1812-13) proposed distraint for enforcing payment of ground rents and submitted certain rules framed on the forms observed in the process of distraint for recovery of the house-tax. These were supported by the Board and sanctioned by Government. However, he was not satisfied with the legality of the procedure and did never resort to it because of fear of the Supreme Court. And this resulted in an accumulation of balances. The question was referred to the Advocate-General who gave an adverse opinion on it. No distinct mode of recovery was prescribed till 1829—it was then ordered that notices should be issued to the occupiers asking them to pay their ground rent direct to the Collector’s Cutchery on pain of proceedings before the Court of Requests. In 1930 the old system of collection by Sircars was again resorted to. On the representation of the Collector A. T. Lind in 1819, the Board had earlier sanctioned the annual issue of bills in supersession of the prior quarterly issue of bills.

One fact deserves mention. The rate of Rs. 3 per bigha was levied in accordance with the standing law of the empire. In 1732 the Governor and Council had been contemplating “the raising of rents of their own zemindari of Calcutta, they received (on its) being rumoured abroad, a peremptory purwanah from the Soubah forbidding them, in which the Soubah told them that they were presuming to do a thing which he himself had not power to do, and if they persisted they would by the laws of the empire forfeit their lands”. From that time till 1850 the rates

had never been raised. However, by Act XXIII of 1850 the rent was declared to be at the rate of 3 annas per cottah.

The subsequent procedure was as follows. The collector notified annually by advertisement in the *Calcutta Gazette* the periods into which the town was divided would fall due. The rent bills were prepared from a demand register and delivered to the tenants and duly receipted when the amount was tendered at the collectorate. In case of default a demand notice was issued and served upon the defaulter or on the premises to which it referred. And this was followed, after an interval of 7 days, by a warrant of distraint in accordance with the procedure laid down in Chapter VIII of the Presidency Small Causes Courts Act 1882. It may be noted that the Small Cause Courts were established in the Presidency-towns by a Charter of George II dated 8 January 1753 (26 Geo II). The rent of the Calcutta holdings was redeemable on payment of 30 years' rent. Originally it was redeemable at 15 years'; afterwards raised to 20 years' and finally to 30 years' purchase.\*

### (iii) *Modes of distraint\* and action of debt*

#### (a) *Distraint*

##### (1) *The concept explained*

As reported by Millet in 1848 the collection of the ground rents continued on a most unsatisfactory basis down to 1850 : "Distraint is the only process now resorted to for the recovery of arrears of Calcutta ground rents. In the first instance a notice is issued to the defaulter requiring him to appear at the collector's cutchery to explain the cause of non-payment. If he fails to appear, a *warrant of distraint* is served by the Collector's bailiff. In most instances, however, when distraint is threatened, the defaulter attends at the Collector's office and comes to some kind of settlement. It would be more consistent with the spirit of British law by which Calcutta is governed to confine the remedies for the recovery of arrears of a rent charge to *distress and an action of debt*. I would beg to bring to the attention of the President in Council the state of the law with reference to the

recovery of these ground rents by distress, and to suggest that it may be well in this *new law* clearly to give such a power to the Collector". Millet was talking of a new law *i.e.*, a draft Act (1846-7) in which the Board was contemplating a provision that whenever the ground rent of any land would be in arrear and the Collector unable to recover it by distraint, it would be lawful for him, after the expiry of the year relating to the arrear, to sell the right, title and interest of the defaulter in the land.<sup>29</sup> It may be noted that Chapter VIII of the Small Cause Courts Act, 1882 vests such powers of the sale u/s 65 in the court, while the Collector used to have only the power of distraint and not of sale. That is why the proposed Act sought to give to the Collector "the summary power of sale", which was to Millet's liking, though disapproved by the Advocate-General.

The legal point to note is that "the power of distress was of common right only" as pointed out by Millet, "when a reversion remained in the donor or lessor. In the case, therefore, of a grant of lands in fee simple subject to a rent (the effect of the *pattahs* granted by the collector), it was necessary expressly to reserve the power to distraint for the arrears of such rent. This the *pattahs* in use do not do".<sup>29</sup> In other words 'distraint' is incompatible with 'sale'. To understand its implications it is necessary to have a clear idea of the rule at common law in respect of 'distraint'. The word 'distress' is derived from Latin 'distingere' meaning 'to bind fast'. This is equivalent to 'distraint' which came into use in 1730. Now 'distraint' is the substantive from the verb 'distress', meaning in law "to constrain or force (a person) by the seizure and detention of a chattel or thing, to perform some obligation; to punish by such service for non-performance of an obligation". However, in 1774, it meant "to levy for a debt, especially for arrears of rent".<sup>30</sup> In this light Jowitt defines "distress" as "a taking, without legal process, of a personal chattel from the possession of a wrongdoer into the hands of a party grieved, as a *pledge* for the redressing of an injury, the performance of a duty, or the satisfaction of a de-

mand".<sup>31</sup> According to Black it is "a common law right of landlord, now regulated by statute, to seize a tenant's goods and chattels in a non-judicial proceeding to satisfy an arrear of rent".<sup>32</sup> From this survey it becomes evident that 'distrain' is marked by the following features : (i) it is a common law right of a landlord ; (ii) the seizure takes place in a non-judicial proceeding ; (iii) it is a pledge for the satisfaction of a demand.

In a case of *Rossomoy Dutt v. Raja Radhakanta Deb*<sup>33</sup> arising out of the grant and device by an Indenture of 28 April, 1788 by the E.I. Company to Maharajah Nobokishen Bahadur of the taluks of Sootanuttee, Baghbazar and Hoogulcundy the lessee claimed the same rights of distrain for recovery of arrears of rent due by the pattah-holders as was exercised by the Company. It was argued that the Company had been enforcing from time immemorial the payment of rent by distress and that by the Indenture the right of distrain was conveyed to the defendant's ancestor. The Supreme Court decided the case as follows :

1. The land had been held under a *pattah* granted by the defendant. The *pattah* was perpetual and it purported to be an absolute conveyance. Rent could not be reserved after an absolute conveyance. In the face of the *pattah*, there was no reversion. Hence distrain became inapplicable.
2. The Company did not exist immemorially, so the question of the immemorial right to distrain could not arise.

In the result the case was decided in favour of the plaintiff. This decision clinched the issue, namely, that the Collector could not use his power of distrain against his pattah-holders.

## 2. *Stages of evolution*

Among the ancient legal forms of a half-pastoral, half-agricultural people one comes upon traces of a foray. And this survives in the Law of Distress. The most probable account of its origin

31. Jowitt's dictionary, 630 ; Blackstone's Commentary, vol. 3, 6.

32. Black op. cit., 426 ; Van Ness Industries Inc. V. Claremont Painting and Decorating, Co., 129, N. J. Super 507

33. Reported in the *Hurkara* dated 5 August, 1847.



is that it is "a genuinely disorderly proceeding which the law steps in to regulate". In the second stage attempts were made to moderate reprisals and regulate revenge for wrong. Distress became a semi-orderly contrivance for extorting satisfaction. This is seen in the modified exemption of certain goods from distraint, for example, plough-oxen. The third stage is represented by the intervention of the State. The King intervenes in his administrative capacity to restore the thing seized on pledge given through his Sheriff. Both the distrainor and distrainee are placed under a compulsion which drives them to a judicial arbitration. In the 4th stage the extra-judicial seizure becomes judicial seizure. In the 5th stage Distress is lost in and absorbed by Attachment and Distringas. The theory of Attachment is the taking of property into the actual or constructive possession of the judicial power.

In this context two alternative expedients were adopted by nascent law. The first consisted in tolerating distraint up to a certain point—it connived at so far as it served to compel the submission of defendants to the jurisdiction of courts, but in all other cases it was treated as wilful breach of the peace. The second was the incorporation of distraint with a regular procedure. Compliance with a great number of forms was a necessity. A third is noticeable in a still more advanced condition of legal ideas. Here the Tribunals take the seizure of land or goods into their own hands and use it to coerce defendants into submission. Finally, courts of justice resort to coercion before judgment on the rarest occasions.<sup>34</sup> The 3rd and 4th stages are illustrated by Chapter VIII of Act XV of 1882 (Small Cause Court Act) and Order 17 of Act V of 1908 (Code of Civil Procedure).

### 3. *Practice*

Prior to the Supreme Court (13 Geo III C. 63—the Regulating Act, 1773) the process by which the ground rents had been realised may be described in the words of Evelyn, the then Collector in 1781 thus: "The etnamdars or native Collectors by their *own authority* arrested the debtor and confined him. If he

34. Maine, H. S.—*Lectures on the early history of Institutions* (1905). 265-7, 276. 278.

did not pay in a reasonable time he was put in the stocks, had his ears pulled, or a peon ordered to lay hold of him by the neck and run him backwards and forwards in the public cutchery. This relates to Natives only. With regard to English, Portuguese, Armenians and the richer Natives, who were too powerful, the etmamdars represented it to the Collector or Committee of Revenue who enforced payment by confinement from the Portuguese and Natives, but what method was adopted to compel the English inhabitants to pay, I do not know".<sup>37</sup> This reveals that discrimination was made between Natives and Europeans. And the English were distinguished from others for favoured treatment. Moreover, a distinction was made between rich and poor Natives in matters of distraint.

The Regulating Act established the Supreme Court replacing the Mayor's Court. The controversy of the Court's jurisdiction over the Zamindars arose as soon as it began to function. Writs were issued by the court "into all parts of the provinces, for bringing up zamindars, farmers and other natives, proprietors of land, to the Court of Calcutta, at the suit and to answer complaints of natives". Sometimes the Supreme Court interfered with the orders of the Collector and the realisation of the ground rents was attended with difficulty. To remove this difficulty the 'ground rent' was declared 'land revenue' within the meaning of the Act of Settlement, 1781 (21 Geo III, 70). And finally the recovery of ground rents by distraint was legalised by Act XXIII of 1850. So the position at present is that if the rent of a holding is not paid by the last day of the quarter, a demand notice is issued to the defaulter for payment and in case of non-compliance another notice is issued to the occupier of the holding. If the rent remains still unpaid, it is followed by warrant of distraint in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Small Causes Court Act.

#### (b) *Action of debt*

An action of debt lay where a person claimed the recovery of a liquidated or certain sum of money affirmed to be due to him. It was generally founded on some contract alleged to have taken

place between the parties, or on some matter of fact from which the law would imply a contract between them. This was the debt in the *debet*, which was the principal and only common form. The second variety is called debt in the *detinet*, which lay for the specific recovery of goods under a contract to deliver them. An action of debt as a technical term is now obsolete. The words—*debet et detinet* (he owes and detains)—were used in the writ and declaration in the action for debt. This action applied to debts and goods. Where the action was for the recovery of money, both words were used : when it was for the recovery of goods only, *detinet* was used. In the case of the ground rent of Calcutta the so-called action related to the first kind.<sup>36</sup> With respect to the scope of the action of debt, it may be said that it was used for 5 purposes ; (i) money lent, (ii) the price of goods sold, (iii) arrears of rent due upon a lease for years, (iv) money due from a surety, and (v) a debt confessed by a sealed document.<sup>37</sup>

(d) *The effect of Permanent Settlement and its abolition*

Before the advent of the English the zamindars or farmers had obtained settlement of three villages for collection of rents for a limited period and they used to pay stipulated revenues to the Dewan of Bengal. The E.I. Company by virtue of their purchase of these villages had converted themselves to the status of a zamindar or farmer for collection of rents. The Permanent Settlement came into operations under sec. 3 of Regulation I of 1793 in the zillahs of the Bengal Subah. There the land was held by zamindars on condition of their paying to the government the revenue fixed under the Permanent Settlement of 1793 known as Lord Cornwallis's Settlement or Permanent Settlement regarded as the *Magna Carta of Bengal* and the zamindars were entitled to perpetual possession so long as the revenue was punctually paid. On failure to pay the revenue into the Collector's cutchery by the fixed date, the zamindari was put up to sale by the Collector for arrears of revenue under what was commonly called the "Sunset" law. To implement the 1793 Regulation a touzi

roll with a separate number for each estate was prepared for every revenue district except the Town of Calcutta.

In 1793 the position of the Company in Calcutta was that of an owner of a revenue-free grant. The tenancies existing under the grant were for residential or other non-agricultural purposes with a rent unalterable. The nature of the tenancies was *mourashi mokarari*. Subsequently the Company acquired the rights of the Crown in India, that is, the sovereign right. As a result, the right acquired by the lakhiraj grant for Calcutta merged into the sovereign right. In other words, all tenancies under the lakhiraj estates of the Company came directly under the sovereign right. However, the Permanent Settlement of 1793 left the affairs of the Company in Calcutta as they were. The Company's Agent, the Collector of Calcutta used to grant pattahs in the same way and under the same terms and conditions as before. The Sunset law for the realisation of revenue was not in force in Town Calcutta. The English law was applied to land tenures originating in the ancient native system and thereby Government was placed in the same position as a private landlord. The natural outcome of this 'state of things was Act XXIII of 1850 which legalised the recovery by distraint of owners of ground rent and government declared the Calcutta ground rent to be land revenue within the meaning of the Act of Settlement, 1780 (21 Geo III. C. 70) so as to oust the jurisdiction of the then Supreme Court. The Calcutta ground tenure thus differed from that of the Regulation districts in the following ways. *First*, a touzi roll of estates acquired under the Permanent Settlement and prevalent in the zillahs did not exist in Calcutta. *Second*, the State demand under the Permanent Settlement was fixed at 9/10th of the actual rental, whereas in Calcutta the rent could be fixed at three rupees sicca per bigha from the occupiers of tenanted lands in accordance with the law of the Empire. *Third*, the zamindari could be put up to sale under the Sunset law in the Permanent Settlement areas, while the Company had no power of sale or resumption on failure to pay the ground rent, the arrears of which were recoverable only by distraint and sale of the occupier's movable property. *Fourth*, unlike the former, the Company was the absolute owner of the *coomar* or common or waste lands of Calcutta, which could be sold, granted or let to applicants for buildings or other purposes. *Finally*, Government

as the Zamindar of Calcutta had followed the old native customs in the collection of rents from the tenants as is evident from the Revenue Board's letter dated July 9, 1789 to Colebrooke, the Collector of Calcutta in which they directed the latter to "immediately hold the *Poonea* (Punya) i.e. the day on which the settlement for the new year is made, if not already held and commence the collections, as the year (was) considerably advanced".<sup>38</sup>

Here it is necessary to bring out the significance of 'tenure' and 'estate'. Tenure signifies the relation between lord and tenure. What it implies is that the person called the 'owner' does not own the land, but merely holds it as tenant of the Crown or of some other feudal superior. A tenant is described in common speech as a 'landowner'. And the question is : what it is that he owns ? Common law solves the problem in a curious manner. *First*, it detaches ownership from the land itself and then attaches it to an imaginary thing called an 'estate' in the land.<sup>39</sup> The tenant does not own the land, but he owns an estate in the land. 'Estate' describes the tenant's relation to the land by indicating the *extent* of his proprietary interest. This interest varies in size according to the time for which it is to continue in existence. Duration governs quantum.<sup>40</sup> In this context Maitland observes : "Proprietary rights in land are projected upon the plane of time. The category of quantity, of duration, is applied to them. The life-tenant's rights are a finite quantity ; the free-tenant's rights are an infinite quantity".<sup>41</sup> The medieval law was designed to meet the needs of *feudalism*. The foundation of the system was the *fief*, i.e., the land which the inferior (vassal) holds as a tenant of the superior (Lord). The word *fief* becomes *feudum* in Latin, and *feud*, and later *fee* in English. Feudalism was a system of government through the agency of landholders, called in Persian *zamindars*. In feudal theory no man could "own" land save the King. All the land was divided among the tenants holding 'estates' in it.

The Permanent Settlement Regulation of 1793 became out-

38. Sterndale, op. cit., 32-3, 44.

39. Markby, W.—Elements of law (4th edn.), Art. 330 at 163-4.

40. Cheshire, G. C.—The modern law of real property (4th edn.), 27.

41. Pollock/Maitland—History of English Law, vol. II, 10.

moded in course of time. The question of abolition of the zamindari system was a matter for agitation for many years in the country. As a result in 1938, the Floud Commission appointed to investigate the matter recommended that the interests of rent-receivers should be acquired on reasonable terms to enable the actual cultivators to become tenants. In other words, the Commission recommended that land should belong to the tillers of the soil. To this end the West Bengal Government passed the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act 1953 (Act I of 1954) and abolished the interests of the zamindars and intermediaries. But Calcutta has been excluded from its operation. Art. 31 A/2(a) of the Constitution of India validates such acquisition of zamindaris or the abolition of the Permanent Settlement without interference from courts. The word 'estate' used in it has been interpreted by the Supreme Court. The basic concept of the word 'estate' is that the person holding the estate should be the proprietor of the soil and should be in direct relationship with the State, paying land revenue to it except where it is remitted in whole or parts.<sup>42</sup>

#### (c) *The Cutcheries*

The word 'Cutcherry' is derived from Hindustani 'kachari'. It means an office of administration, a court-house. In Bengal the word was not applied to a merchant's counting-house, called *dufter*, but was applied to the office of an Indigo-Planter or a Zamindar, where the business was more like that of a Magistrate's or Collector's office. Thus it was used in the *Proceedings* dated January 4, 1763 No. 619 under the heading "Court of Cutcherry and arbitration" and also in 1763 in Rev. J. Long's *Selections from unpublished Records of Government (Fort William) for the year 1748-1767* (Calcutta, 1869), 316) thus :

"The Secretary acquaints the Board that agreeably to their orders of the 9th May, he last Saturday attended the court of *Cutcherry* and acquainted the Members with the charge the President of the Court had laid against them for non-attendance".

The use of the word may also be seen in J. Z. Holwell's *Interesting Historical Events Relative to the Province of Bengal and the*

42. *Purushathaman v. State of Kerala*, AIR 1962 SC 694 (104-5).

*Empire of Indostan etc.* (Part I, 1766 ; Part II, 1767) Part II at 152 :

C. 1765—"We can truly aver that during almost five years that we presided in the *Cutcherry* Court of Calcutta, never any murder or atrocious crime came before us but it was proved in the end a *Bramin* was at the bottom of it".<sup>43</sup>

(i) *Kinds*

There were three Courts or Cutcheries established under the authority of the Moghul Government or the Nawab of Bengal when the Company existed by its sufferance. They were allowed for the preservation of good order and government within the limits of the Company's factory and the lands attached thereto. And they were as follows :<sup>44</sup>

The *first* was the *Court of Cutcherry* composed of the President and Council or any three of them, the President being one. It was organised in 1704. The proceedings were of the most summary description. According to Bolts, this body used to meet on days stated at their own option—it heard, tried and determined all matters of *meum et tuum* to any amount in respect of the natives only. The plaintiff and defendant appeared with their respective witnesses and the Court heard what they had to offer or prove *viva voce* and immediately proceeded to decree in such matters as did not admit of much contest. From the decisions of the Court appeals lay to the Governor and Council. But this was seldom done except in matters of the greatest consequence. The idea was to have every cause determined by arbitrators or umpires, chosen by the parties, or with their consent—their decisions were final and made decrees of the court.

The *second* was the *Zamindari or Fouzdary Cutcherry* in which one of the Council or one of the Company's servants presided as *Zamindar* to try criminal offences among the native inhabitants of Calcutta, where they did not apply to the Court of Justice set up by the English. He proceeded in a summary way to punish and sentence, by fine, imprisonment, condemnation to work in chains upon the roads, for any space of time, even for

43. Hobson—Jobson. 187-8.

44. Sterndale, *op. cit.*, 12-3 ; Firminger, *op. cit.*, 83-6.

life ; and also by flagellation in capital cases, even to death. In the cases of death however, it was usual for the Zamindar first to obtain the approval of the President and Council before the fatal stroke was given. The Moghuls and Nabobs did not permit the professors of Islam to be hanged. So in these cases only the lash was permitted to be inflicted until death. But the officers of the Court called Chawbuckswars or lash-bearers were sometimes so dexterous as to be able to kill a man with 2 or 3 strokes of the Indian Chawback.

The *third* was the *Collector's Cutcherry* which was set up ever since the Company had any thing to do with the collection of ground rent. The Collector was generally a member of the Council. He used to transact the business of his department. In his *Cutcherry* the farmers or tenants, who were backward in payments, were confined, whipped and otherwise punished independently of the other Courts established in Calcutta.<sup>45</sup>

Besides, there was a *Caste Cutcherry*<sup>46</sup> presided over by a Hindu appointed by the Governor. It was composed of a President (Chief Judge) and some Assessors. Since the Brahman was the culprit in caste matters all the non-Brahmans were opposed to him. So, the President could not be a Brahman—he used to be a non-Brahman. Maharaja Nabakrishna became the first President since the Caste Cutcherry (court) was set up by Warren Hastings in 1776. The Caste problem was then acute. People usually changed their castes with the help of the Brahmins. The rich people bribed the Brahmins and degraded the caste of their enemies. And lower castes could be upgraded by satisfying the Brahmins and their agents. This sort of upgrading and degrading of castes became the daily affair. To decide disputes a court was the crying need of the time. Hence, Hastings set up such a Cutcherry. The Maharaja remained the President of this Cutcherry almost throughout his life. Only once or twice Krishnakanta Nandi of Cossimbazar, known as Kantababu became the President of the Caste Cutcherry. Both were non-Brahmins—the one was a Kayastha ; the other was a Tili.<sup>47</sup>



(ii) *The Zamindar's versus Mayor's Court*

At Calcutta there was a ban on the Mayor's Court to handle cases among the natives, because they could be dealt with in the zamindar's court, which had always been functioning and dispensing justice to the natives after 1753 in cases over 5 pagodas. Cases upto that amount fell within the purview of the Court of Requests. However, a controversy came to light by 1753. The relationship between the two was not cordial, but competitive—a kind of rivalry was visible.

Thus one Soodasibdas filed a complaint in the Mayor's Court against Gopal Bahadur, both being residents of Calcutta. Holwell, the Zamindar, imprisoned the complainant and refused to release him even after the Mayor's Court had asked him to do so. Thereafter the latter moved the Governor and Council, but they also took no action. The Court then represented to the Company that the Collector had no jurisdiction to administer justice, since he was concerned with the collection of revenue and the civil justice had been vested in the Court.<sup>48</sup> Sometime later there arose a serious dispute between the two courts. The prohibition imposed by the Charter of 1753 on the Mayor's Court against handling native cases fortified the position of the Zamindar's court. But the Mayor's Court ruled that only Hindus and Muslims had been excluded from its jurisdiction<sup>49</sup> and not others, namely, Europeans, Armenians, Fringys (Anglo-Indians), since the latter were His Majesty's subjects. The Company was in agreement with this.<sup>50</sup> In 1755 a European and his wife Phoebe, a Fringy brought a suit in the Zamindar's Court against Sarah, Phoebe's mother to recover a pair of diamond rings deposited by Phoebe with her. The Zamindar decreed the suit and the rings were returned to Phoebe. Sarah, thereafter, complained to the Mayor's Court which directed the Zamindar to appear before it and produce the rings. When he appeared, he was treated discourteously.<sup>51</sup> Holwell, the Zamindar brought it to the

48. Letter from the Calcutta Mayor's Court to the Company dated March 1, 1754 : *Bengal, Past and Present*, VIII, 34.

49. *Bengal Past and Present*, VIII, 31.

50. Letter dated January 31, 1755.

51. *Bengal Past and Present* X, 123-45.

notice of the Council on May 19, 1755 and in a Consultation on May 23, 1755 it was held by 5-4 that Holwell had deviated from the past practice of the Zamindar. Holwell challenged this decision ; but the Mayor's Court in a communication dated May 26, 1755 asserted that it had exclusive jurisdiction to try civil cases and so they did "as judges of His Majesty's Court know of no judicial power vested in him" (Holwell, the Zamindar). Ultimately on September 25, 1755 the Council decided that the Zamindar might take cognisance of cases only against the Hindus and the Muslims, but not of those between Fringys, Europeans and Armenians. For civil cases above 20 rupees between Indians a Court of 5 Company's servants was appointed with a right of appeal to the Governor and Council when the amount involved was over one hundred rupees. The quorum was fixed at 3 ; but only one Judge decided the cases. The Court of Requests heard cases below 20 rupees.<sup>52</sup>

(f) *The black zamindar*

The salary of the zamindar was Rs. 2,000 a year and the bulk of the receipts from the farms went into his pocket. Besides, he was engaged in private trade which fetched him a large income. The bare salary did not constitute his real income. Many substantial windfalls, observes Sterndale, came in their way when the traditionary pagoda was shaken by the stormy political winds of the time.<sup>53</sup> Bolts has recorded the distribution of the windfalls, on three occasions, amongst the Company's Collectors as follows :—

- A. *The revolution in favour of Meer Jaffar Ally Khawn in 1757 :*  
 Richard Beacher—£ 27,000 ; William Frankland—  
 £ 11,360 ;  
 Matthew Collett—£ 11,666½ ; Peter Anyatt—£ 11,666½.
- B. *The revolution in favour of Meer Cossim Ally Khawn in 1760 :*  
 John Zaphaniah Holwell—£ 30,937 ;  
 William Brightwell Summer—£ 28,000.

52. Jain, M. P.—*Outlines of Indian Legal History*. (4th edn.), 48-9.

53. Bolts, *op. cit.*, App. A. No. XII.

C. *The accession of Nazimooddowlah in 1763 :*

Charles Stafford Playdell—£ 11,666½ ;

Samuel Middleton—£ 14,291 ; George Gray—£ 11,666½.

And Gray "as a traveller through the city (of Cossimbazar) contrived in a few hours to get from His Excellency (the Nawab) for future imaginary negative services".<sup>54</sup>

Under the Collector or Zamindar there was a native official known as the "black collector" or "black zamindar". He was a person accustomed by immemorial practice to supplement his inadequate salary by what he, following native traditions, considered as the perquisites of his office, emoluments. But these would be treated by his employers on scrutiny, to be embezzlements.<sup>55</sup> Sterndale traced this office to 1720. But this seems to be incorrect. For, the *Diary and Consultation Book* (at Fort William) dated April 4, 1709 in section 306 mentions "the black zamindar" employed to take care of the bazaars and three towns. It is stated that the post lay vacant for several months. During this period one Nandaram officiated. Thereafter Rambuddar was appointed and one Santose Mullick stood surety for him. It is evident from section 457 that Nandaram was fined Rs. 3,000 for wronging the Company's tenants. Secs. 461 and 463 further reveal that Jagat Das was subsequently appointed the black zamindar and found guilty thereafter.<sup>56</sup>

However, one Govindram Mittre became the black deputy or black zamindar in 1720 and remained in that post till 1756. The head of the office constantly fluctuated and changed and became a stranger to the nature of the office. Consequently a power in perpetuity devolved on the standing deputy. The bazars he looked after were Soba, Dobapara, Hautcola, Baugh, Charles, Sam new. Bagan, Ghastola, John Nagore. The tyranny of Govindram was so much that he struck terror in the mind of the natives and "none durst complain or give information". So he amassed a vast fortune. He spent vast sums of money during his lifetime on the erection of temples and the performance of *pujas* and religious ceremonies on a grand scale, i.e., with pomp and eclat.

54. Sterndale, op. cit., 13.

55. Firminger, op. cit., 85.

56. Wilson, C. R.—*The early annuals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. I (1895), 314.

Thus in 1730 he built a magnificent *Naborutna* (nine-jewel) temple on the Chitpore Road. And its highest pinnacle was higher than the Ochterloney Monument (*i.e.* over 165 feet in height). The main building was overthrown in the cyclone of 1737, but the smallest cupola exists. Govindram made his power felt and this has found entry in a common Bengali nursery rhyme as follows :

Govindram	..	<i>Churri</i>	..	(rod) ;
Bonmally Sarker	..	<i>Bari</i>	..	(house) ;
Omi Chander	..	<i>Darhi</i>	..	(beard) ;
Juggut Setter	..	<i>Kawri</i>	..	(money)

The second of these owned the finest native house of the day. The third was the rich merchant who acted as the 'go-between' between the Company's officers and Meer Jaffar and wore a long beard. And the fourth was the richest banker of the time.<sup>57</sup>

The family of Govindram gradually declined in wealth and power from the time of his son Roghunath Mittre. His most noteworthy descendant was his great-great-grandson, Rai Kasheswar Mitter Bahadur, Late Principal Sudder Amean and Small Cause Court Judge. Govindram was dismissed by Holwell in 1753 for "sundry abuses and depredations". But he was reinstated by the Council, on a refund of Rs. 3,397 embezzled by him. It appears, he continued in office till 1756. After the re-taking of the Town by the English he was appointed Deputy Foujdar or Police Magistrate. Govindram's grandson, Radha Churn Mittre was condemned to death on February 27, 1765 by the General Quarter Sessions for the Town of Calcutta for committing forgery. The sentence appeared so extravagant that the inhabitants of Calcutta petitioned the President and Governor, John Spencer and expressed their alarm and astonishment. As a result Radha Churn was pardoned.<sup>58</sup>

57. Sterndale, *op. cit.*, 14-5.

58. Long, *op. cit.*, No. 840 ; Jain *op. cit.*, 50.

## CHAPTER V

### THE COLLECTOR OF CALCUTTA

"Yet she could not bring herself to suppose that the little grateful gentle governess would dare to look up to such a magnificent personage as the *Collector of Boggley Wallah*".

—W. M. Thackeray : 'Vanity Fair' (1848). Chap. IV.

In 1699 Bengal was declared a separate Presidency and its fort called Fort William in honour of the King. And a President and Council of four members were appointed. The members of the Council were : (1) the accountant ; (2) the ware-house-keeper ; (3) the marine purser ; and (4) the receiver of revenue or the Collector of Calcutta. In 1700 the first to become the President of Fort William in Bengal was Sir Charles Eyre, Job Charnock's son-in-law. And Ralph Sheldon became the first Collector of Calcutta, as noted by C. R. Wilson in his *The Early annals of the English in Bengal* (Vol. I, 1895, Preface, xvii). Hence, Sterndale's statement that John Beard became the first President (as recorded in his book at page 11) is not correct. Eyre remained the President from 26 May 1700 to 7 January, 1701. Thereafter John Beard became the President on 7 January, 1701 and remained in that post till 7 July, 1705. But this 'Collector' was not the same as that created by Warren Hastings in 1772. The Regulation of 14th May 1772 stated : "The Company having determined to stand forth as *Dewan*, the Supervisors should now be designated *Collectors*". The difference between the two may now be brought out.

#### (a) *Nomenclature*

The term, *tal'ildar* derived from Persian was formerly employed to designate the 'cash-keeper' in a firm or private establishment. As recorded by V. M. Williamson in his *The East India Mecum*. vol. I (1810, at 209) : "The Sircar or *tusseeldar* (cash-keeper) receiving one key, and the master retaining the other".<sup>1</sup> This was

1. Hobson-Jobson, 888-9.

known as the system of double-lock used in Treasuries and Sub-treasuries. And it is still in vogue in the Calcutta Collectorate—the Cashier retains one key, while the Treasury Officer the second key. The *tahsildar* was translated into English by the word ‘collector’. In regard to Calcutta it came to mean an administrative official, charged with the exercise of executive powers in addition to his civil and criminal jurisdiction over the native inhabitants. However, his principal duties were the collection of the ground rents and town duties.<sup>2</sup>

After 1772 the word meant the Chief Administrative Official of an Indian Zillah. His special duty was the collection of revenue. He used to control magisterial powers. 200 years after he now controls the Executive Magistrate’s powers as separate from the Judicial Magistrate’s powers in terms of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 by way of the separation of the Judiciary from the Executive. And the Collector’s duties were formally settled in 1793 when the appointments were reserved to members of the Covenanted Civil Service. In a letter in 1773 to Josias Dupre, Hastings wrote: “Do not laugh at the formality with which we have made a law to change their name from supervisors to Collectors. You know full well how much the world’s opinion is governed by names”.<sup>3</sup> It is also on record how in 1838 Collectors themselves talked about themselves: “As soon as 3 or 4 of them get together they speak about nothing but ‘employment’ and ‘promotion’ . . . and if left to themselves, they sit and conjugate the verb ‘to collect’: ‘I am a Collector—He was a Collector—we shall be Collectors—you ought to be a Collector—they would have been Collectors’”.

#### (b) *Use of various designations*

The first use was of the ‘receiver of revenue’ or the Collector of Calcutta and it came into vogue in 1700. He was a member of the 4-member Council. The President and Council was in overall charge and this official was accountable to them. The second designation was the ‘Zamindar of Calcutta’ and this office

2. Sterndale, *op. cit.*, 11.

3. Gleig, Rev. G. R.—*Memoirs of Warren Hastings*, Vol. I (1841), 267.

4. Maitland, J. C.—*Letters from Madras during the years 1836-1839* (By a Lady, 1843) 146; *Hobson-Jobson* at 235.

was created in 1720. This was the first separation of the office. Sterndale has been unable to trace out the first Zamindar, but guessed that "it is probable that it was Mr. Freke". But it is found from the list of Governors and Presidents of Fort William, Calcutta (1700-1835) of James Rainey's *A historical and topographical sketch of Calcutta* (ed. P. T. Nair, 1986) at page 147—App. C—that one Samuel Feake was the President from 12 January 1718 to January 1723. Probably this 'Feake' is spelt by Sterndale as 'Freke'. In that case the claim of Feake to the post of the first Zamindar is ruled out, because at the time he was the President. However, it appears from App. N relating to the list of 'zamindars or Collectors of Calcutta' (1700-1835) that one John Eyre became the zamindar in July 1720 and remained in that post till May 1721. Hence, the credit of becoming the first zamindar goes to John Eyre. He was succeeded by John Stackhouse in May 1721. Thereafter there is a big gap upto 1743, because the official records "were destroyed by Sirajuddaulah's followers at the sack of Calcutta" in 1756. However, Sterndale could discover one pattah No. 704 dated 30 April 1728 signed as 'P. R. . . . t . . . yll Jemmr'. From this he has rightly guessed that the signature might be that of Thomas Braddyll who later on became the President during 29 January 1739 and 4 February, 1746. Sterndale writes that Braddyll succeeded Crutenden as President. But this statement is not correct. It is found from App. C that he succeeded John Stackhouse who remained the President from 25 February 1732 to 29 January, 1739.

The third designation was "Collector-General" to which William F. Frankland succeeded. He remained in that post from December 1759 to November, 1760). In the fourth change that came about in 1801 the designation may be called the "amalgamated collectorship" of Calcutta and 24-Parganas. This continued from March 1801 to 1819 and the first of such collectors was Frederick Fitzroy and the last Charles Trower. The fifth change brought in the designation, "Collector of Calcutta Ground Rents" and the seal of the office was altered to "Calcutta Pattah office, 1819". The first officer appointed to such post was Alexander Francis Lind, who was also "Sub-Secretary to the Board of Revenue".

*(c) Special mention of some Collectors*

Some of the Collectors became famous or notorious and a brief description of their activities is now given here. A list of collectors is given in Appendix N. John Zephaniel Holwell was the famous zamindar at the time of the capture and sack of Calcutta by Sirajuddaulah. The registrations of several pattahs granted by him exist. He became the zamindar in 1752 and remained in the post till 1756. He was the first to expose corruption of the office and to institute a probe into its management. As such he introduced much-needed reforms. The Governor, Drake and some others of the Fort fled when it was besieged by the Nawab in 1756. Those who remained held a council and selected Holwell as their chief. The garrison made a vigorous defence of the Fort, that remained no longer tenable in the end. As a result, Holwell had to capitulate. In the night of June 20, 1756 came what is known as the Black Hole tragedy. He did not resume charge of the office of the Zamindar after the retaking of Calcutta but rose in Council till in 1760 he succeeded Clive as Governor (23 January to 27 July 1760). He returned to England and died in 1798. He wrote "Interesting historical events relative to the province of Bengal and the Empire of Indostan etc., Parts I (1766) and II (1767)."

The first Collector-General was W. F. Frankland. He was born in 1720-22 and arrived in Calcutta on August 2, 1740. He was Buxey (paymaster) and accountant, Fort William, 1756. During the siege of the Fort he avoided "the Black Hole" by escaping from the Fort to the ships and thereby played "a somewhat inglorious part". He and Manningham were entrusted on the evening of the 18th June with the embarkation of some European women in the *Dodulay* and to return to join the Council in the night, but they did not return despite the President's summons. Yet the records shew that this pusillanimous gentleman was allowed re-employment and promoted, for in 1758-9 he became the Collector and third in the Council. He returned to England and purchased Muntham, Sussex and died on 28 December, 1805.<sup>5</sup>

The third Collector to note is George Gray (1765). He had the courage to challenge Lord Clive, the Governor and President



in Council. This was possible because of the peculiar position of the Collector of Calcutta vis-a-vis the Governor and Council. Thus on 8 October, 1765 Lord Clive wrote to the Collector thus : "Sir, complaint has been made to me this morning that you are taking money from the Wh-S of the town, which is a practice prohibited by the Company ; and therefore I desire that you will discontinue it, until you are authorised to the contrary by the Governor and Council". To this Gray's replies in a Minute ran thus : "Being at *the head of an office* and accountable to the Board for my conduct, I do not think myself *privately responsible* to the President. I cannot therefore conceive that your Lordship has a right to order me to discontinue any measures that I may think consistent with my authority in the office under my charge." In a further Minute Gray continued : "Lord Clive in his Minute assumes his usual style of affected superiority and contempt for those of different sentiments from himself. Although I do not feel myself hurt by his contumelious manner, yet as submission may encourage him to a continuance of it, I will treat his Lordship with that freedom of sentiment and expression, of which he has set me the example".\* As a consequence he resigned his office.

The fourth Collector of note was Philip Milner Dacres. Twice he was appointed Collector—once he remained so from February 1773 to May 1773 ; and a second time from December 1773 to 1774. He proposed for the first time the establishment of a corps of volunteers in Calcutta. He was one of those who in 1757 petitioned the Governor for the establishment of a corps to be called "The Patriot Band". Besides, he owned certain property in the locality now known after him as Dacres' Lane, which he demised to a native inhabitant "for 500 years subject to the yearly payment upon the feast day of St. Michael, of *one pepper corn*, if demanded". He retired to Europe in 1784. Notorious was Richard Barwell (June to August 1773). He has been described as "cunning, cruel, rapacious, tyrannical and profligate, beyond all European ideas of those qualities". He retired in 1780 with a colossal fortune of 80 lakhs. He became a Member of Parliament and was the typical "*Nabob*" of the day.

The word 'Nabob' is derived from Portuguese *Nababo* and French *Nabab*—they are themselves derived from Hindustani Nawab which is the Arabic plural of *Nayab*, meaning 'a deputy' and applied to a delegate of the supreme chief, viz, to a Viceroy or chief Governor under the Great Moghul. The word came into use in English language in 1612. In 1764 it came to mean a person who returned from India with a large fortune. The transactions of Clive made the epithet familiar in England. Thus the term meant the Anglo-Indians who returned from the East with fortunes. And Samuel Foote's (1720-77) "The Nabob" (1772), aimed at the director and servants of the East India Company, aided in giving general currency to the word.<sup>6</sup> Barwell owned very extensive property in Calcutta, including the Writers' Buildings, which he rented to the Company. He made a registered deed of trust in favour of Sir Elijah Impey and Joseph Cator as trustees for his infant sons, at a rental of 200 Arcot rupees per month for each set of apartments. In other words, the rental was "at 31,720 current rupees per annum to be paid half-yearly in advance", as stated by Philip Francis in his journal. Besides, he had the Kidderpore Military Orphan Asylum. Sir James Fitz—James Stephen observes in his "Story of Nuncoomar": "Barwell had considerable ability. He made an enormous fortune and this in itself raises a presumption against his official purity. He explains to his sister that he had complied with orders forbidding the Company's servants to be concerned in such contracts, by entering . . . to them under the names of natives".<sup>7</sup>

The next name is that of James Edward Colebrooke (1789). He has left his name as a landmark in the revenue history of Bengal. He was a *Persian Translator* to certain agreements entered into with Rajah Mahipnarain Bahadur of Benaras. Subsequently he became the Chief Judge of the Sudder Dewanny Adawlut and was raised to a baronetcy. He is best known for his *Digest of the Regulations and Laws*, which has been quoted by all as an authority. It appears from his correspondence that he had jurisdiction in revenue matters over "Punchannogram", the 55 villages, which were described in the Regulation of 1793 as

6. Hobson-Jobson. 610 : The Shorter Oxford Dictionary. 1307.

7. Sterndale. op. cit., 19-21.

"the districts under the Collector of the town of Calcutta, not included within the limits of the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Judicature". The limits of the Supreme Court's jurisdiction formed a privileged territory governed by English law and exempted from all territorial and revenue regulations. Hunter observes in Volume I at page 21 : "Regulations II, III and IX of 1793 defined the jurisdiction of the Civil, Criminal and Revenue Courts established in 24-Parganas, but it was expressly ruled that the jurisdiction of these tribunals should not extend to the town of Calcutta". During this period the correspondence between the *Khalsa* and the Collectorate reveals that the officer-in-charge was styled "The Collector of the town of Calcutta". At this time there was a revenue expert, appointed Collector, named J. H. Harrington. He was acting Collector from September to 31st October, 1788. He was a writer on 1st August, 1780 ; became a member of the Council in 1826 ; died on 9 April, 1828 in London. His *An Elementary analysis of the Laws and Regulations* (1814-5), Vols. I and II is an authoritative book. "

Another Collector deserving mention was Francis Gladwin. He had two terms as Collector. The first related to the period from November 1788 to May 1789, while the second to that from 1793 to 1799. He was in office for a longer period than any of his predecessors with the exception of Charles Tower. It appears from the Regulations relating to the Courts of Circuit 1790 that the province of Bengal had at that time been formed into 3 Divisions and the first or Calcutta Division comprised "the districts of Nuddea, Beerbhoom, Ramghur, Burdwan, Midnapore, the salt districts, the 24-Pargunnahs, Jessore, and the *districts under the Collector of the Town of Calcutta*, not being within the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Judicature".<sup>8</sup> Gladwin was appointed to collect the first house-tax in 1794. The Collector was allowed 10% on the collections or Rs. 15,000 as cost of collections, compared with 3½% given to native collectors for the ground rent. Gladwin was reputed to be an oriental scholar of some eminence. In 1784 he published "The Calcutta Gazette and Oriental Advertiser". Some of his works were : The Persian Moonshee : A Dictionary of Mahomedan Law ; A system of

Revenue Accounts etc. Earlier he was a candidate for the office of clerk to the Court of Requests. In his application, he stated that "his knowledge of the country languages and his acquaintance with the manners and customs of the natives render him equal to the discharge of the duties of office he solicits". In J. J. Hide's and Chamber's Notes dated 23 July, 1787 is found the record of a case, *Charles Johnstone v. Edmund Morris*. This related to an action against the Sheriff of Calcutta for a false return of *nulla bona* to a writ of *fi-fa* at the suit of the plaintiff against Frances Gladwin for a debt of sicca Rs. 10,680 and Rs. 159 was recovered as cost from Gladwin. Being in insolvent circumstances he assigned all his property to Major Scott in trust for his creditors.

Richmond Thackeray remained Collector from 1812 to 1813. He is best known as the father of the famous novelist, William Makepeace Thackeray, who was born at Calcutta on 18 July, 1811. Richmond Thackeray was also the Collector of House-tax and Collector of 24-Parganahs. He died in 1815. The first officer appointed Collector of Calcutta Ground Rents was Alexander Francis Lind. He was also Sub-Secretary to the Board of Revenue (Govt. Gazettee dated 20 April, 1819). Again he became Collector in 1823. During 1823—35 the Collector of Calcutta also became the Collector of land revenue, 24-Parganahs. After Lind came C. Trower who had the longest term from 1823 to 1835. By 1836 the Board of Revenue was thinking of maintaining "Calcutta as a separate and independent office of collection" (Letter no. 27 dt. 18 January, 1836). And on 29 August, 1837 an "uncovenanted" civil servant was appointed Collector of Calcutta i.e., a Dy. Collector in independent charge. C. Francis was at the time "an uncovenanted assistant in the office of the Secretaries to the Government" and he was appointed Collector. But he had a short tenure, since he died in 1838. The first Bengali to take advantage of the "uncovenanted office" was Koylash Chunder Dutt. First he officiated as Collector of Calcutta when the permanent incumbent, F.A. Lushington went on furlough in 1835. On his return Lushington was appointed Collector of 24-Parganahs and Koylash Dutt became the Collector of Calcutta. Next a Dy. Collector was appointed—he was William Heysham, who held office at intervals from February 1856 to September, 1860.

The Dy. Collector's duties were threefold—(i) the Collection of the ground rents ; (ii) the registration of titles to holdings ; and (iii) the issue of pattahs. The incumbents were Koylash Chunder Dutt in 1857, Shib Chunder Dutt from September 1860 to November 1861 and Obhoy Churn Mullick in December 1862.<sup>9</sup>

(d) *The location of the Collectorate Office*

Calcutta has passed through many vicissitudes. In 1737 it was merely overwhelmed by a terrific hurricane and earthquake ; in 1756 it was stormed and sacked by the Nawab, Sirajuddaulah ; in 1757 it was retaken by Clive ; a hundred years after it was threatened by the Sepoy Mutiny of the native army in 1857 ; in 1864 it became a victim to a terrific cyclone ; in 1905 it faced the Partition of Bengal ; and ultimately came the partition of India and Bengal in 1947. During these changes the Collector's Cutcherry has existed and worked uninterrupted, though its location changed many times.

The Collector's Cutcherry was originally held in the Council House, which stood on the east side of the Council House Street and to the west of the Government House. It was pulled down in 1800 to make room for the erection of the present Government House. And the Collector's Cutcherry had earlier been located in Lall Bazar at the site of the *Carlisle Nephews and Co's office*. It stood between the old Play House on the west and the old jails on the east and to the north of Kiernander's, that is, the old Mission Church. The Cutcherry remained there till 1820, when it was removed to a house at the junction of Chowringhee and Park Street. At that time the Revenue Board's Office was held in Russel Street. Thence in the thirties it journeyed to the old Mint premises in Church Lane (on the site of the present Stamp and Stationary office). 50 years later in 1881 it found its way to a house in Bankshall Street, opposite to the premises quitted by the Board of Revenue (formerly that of the Board of Customs, Salt and Opium). The block of buildings in Charnock place, in the north-western corner of Dalhousie Square (now Benoy-Badal-Dinesh Bagh), now accommodates the Collector and the Presidency Commissioner in between the General Post

9. Sterndale, op. cit., 22-31.

Office and the Reserve Bank of India.<sup>10</sup> The location became known as 3, Charnock place, now 11, Netaji Subhas Road, Calcutta : 700 001.

(c) *The functioning of the Calcutta pattah office*

Archimedes (287-212 B.C.) the Greek scientist cried : "Give me a firm spot on which to stand, and I will move the earth". The so-called "firm spot" is the "fulcrum of a lever. But the East India Company wanted a "fortified place" from which they could carry on their trade and business. To this end they acquired the zamindari rights of three villages of Sutanuti, Kalkatah and Govindpur to make the latter their 'firm spot', a spring-board for their commercial activities. The base they got was for non-agricultural purposes. The office of the Collector of Calcutta was known as the *Pattah* office, since all *pattahs* and leases in the Town of Calcutta were granted from this office. The *pattahs* were granted by the Collector in the zamindari of Calcutta on behalf of the Company. The Collector had two main functions in this connection—the grant of *pattahs* and leases ; and the collection of the ground rents. Usually grants were made in *pattahs* ; but there was one solitary exception. This related to the conveyance of Talook Sutanuti to Raja Naba Kissen, the founder of the Sovabazar family by way of an English Deed of Lease. The system of granting *pattahs* was introduced by the East India Company as early as 1705.<sup>11</sup> *Pattahs* were subsequently granted on payment of a fee of Rs. 4/- in accordance with the rules laid down in the Government order of May 1812. Some of these rules became obsolete owing to the enforcement of Act XXIII of 1850 and the Land Registration Act of 1876. But the *pattah* fee practically remained the same as before, i.e. Rs. 4/4/3, though no *pattah* had been granted since 1900. The word 'pattah' is derived from Sanskrit 'pattaka' relating to purchase of land. Subsequently the word became 'pattah' to mean land-privileges granted by the zamindar. The *pattah*-grantor corresponds to a lessor, while the *pattah*-receiver to a lessee. The *pattah* had its counterpart in an Arabic word 'Kabuliyat', executed by

10. Ibid. 31-2 : Cotton, op. cit., 172-3.

11. Consultation No. 205, at p. 282 : Wilson's *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, vol. 1.

a lessee—it binds the lessee to pay rent to the zamindar.<sup>12</sup> English law also recognises the lease in two parts, known as the lease and the counterpart. The lease is executed by the lessor alone and kept by the lessee, while the counterpart is executed by the lessee alone and kept by the lessor.<sup>13</sup>

(i) *Different forms of pattah*

The earliest pattah was No. 704 dated 30 April, 1728, granted by Braddyll, Zamindar. The next pattah traced is No. 1561 dated November 1, 1743 granted by John Jackson as Zamindar. The third pattah available was No. 29 dated 2 March, 1749 granted by the Zamindar, Samuel Rooper. The earliest pattahs are not available, probably destroyed at the time of the sack of Calcutta by Nawab Sirajuddaulah in 1756. It may be noted that the Collector used the designation of Zamindar while issuing the pattahs and this practice continued till 1790. As reported by Millet in his Minute at page 71 : “The *Coomar* (i.e. *khamar*) or common or waste lands of Calcutta were the absolute property of the Company, and were sold, granted or let to applicants for building or other purposes”. But in the case of occupied or tenanted ground the right of the Company was limited to the receipt of the ground rent. Pattahs were granted at a fixed rate of sicca rupees per bigha per annum for all lands whether previously occupied, sold, granted, or let by the Company, unless held *lakhiraj* or rent-free. The form of the *pattah* was extremely simple : a specimen is given below. It was first issued after the recapture of Calcutta by Clive and the establishment of the Zamindari Cutcherry thus :

“A *pattah* being granted unto Lakicanto Seat for 6 cottahs and 8 chittacks of ground in Bazar Calcutta, rent 15 annas 7 pies sicca per annum. Calcutta Cutcherry, this 2nd day of January, 1758 No. 1.

Sd. M. Collett.  
Zamindar.”

It may be seen that this pattah is, to some extent, vague, since it does not mention any boundary or area leased out. Hence, the position remains somewhat obscure.

12. Das, J. M.—*Bangla Bhasar Abhidhan*, 432, 1313.

13. Jowitt's *Dictionary of English Law*, 1076.

The history of the pattah office reveals that there had been different authorities to grant the pattahs in different times. Thus the pattahs were granted by the Zamindar from 1720 to 1758. In the second period (1758-1775) these were granted by the Collector or "Collector-General". In the third period (1776-1785) these were issued by the Calcutta Committee of Revenue under the seal of the President, who was at the same time apparently "Collector". But this Committee was abolished in 1785 when the fourth period began and it became the duty of the Collector to issue pattahs. This continued till 1818-19 when the fifth period began and the pattahs were granted by the Committee of Revenue for a short period. After the restoration of office in 1758 a second form came to be adopted: "In lieu of a former pattah lost on the capture (catastrophe) of Calcutta, 1756". One of the earliest pattahs of the period (1758) granted 30 bighas of ground in Arcooly, Simla, new Govindpore to Sobaram Bysack for "pious use" to make a tank—"rent to be remitted for ever". The third form came into use in 1766: "Ram Kissen Poddar's grandson, Berassore Sein, hereby sells his house and compound containing 18 cottahs of ground with all the appurtenances in Sootanuttee unto the Nab Kissen Moonshey, for the sum of nine hundred Arcot rupees (Ars. 900). Calcutta Collector's Cutcherry, 20th day of December, 1766".

In 1767 Govinda Churn Seal and others sold their garden in Sutanuttee to Rajah Nabo Kishen Bahadur. The title 'Rajah Bahadur' was conferred on Nabo Kishen by the Emperor Shah Alum in 1765. Upon these transfers a fee was levied by the Collector which formed one of the perquisites of his office.

It may be noted that the grants to Nabo Kishen had been by one private individual to another. That is why the form had been modified. But so far as the Collector's grant was concerned, it remained practically the same till 1819, when Lind proposed to the Board that the form should be modified so as to insert the boundaries of the land as well in future pattahs. And this fourth form came into vogue—in it some description of the boundary for identification of the area leased out was noted. This may be illustrated from the following specimen:

"A pattah is hereby granted to Haze Mohd Hanip for 15 cottahs of ground situated in Dhee Mulunga of Arpuli which



ground was the property of Saleygram and Ramhurry Poddar. Application was made on the 4th January, 1824. No. 1428 advertised and published on the 15th January, 1824. Measurements made by Rahamat Amin no. 352.

Rent Rs. 2/4

Pattah office

Given under my hand and seal

Calcutta.

This 10th day of May, 1825

Received Rs. 4/-

Sd. C. Grober :

Collector of Calcutta".

And pattahs granted after Heysham (1856-60) contained more precise materials for identification of the land. The new trend was noticeable from a pattah given in 1853 as shown below :

"Pattah no. 4.

Bill no. 11 of Block no. XVIII.

Pattah is hereby granted to John Jackson Esq. for holding no. 11 of Block no. XVIII of the South Division measuring 1 bigha 9 cottahs 10 chittacks (one bigha nine cottahs and the ten chittacks—no sq. ft.) bearing house assessment of no. 28 of Chowringhee Road and measured at an annual rental of Company's Rs. 5/8/10½ (Rupees five annas eight and pies ten and half) payable on or before the 30th April in each year.

Calcutta Collectorate  
office,

Given under my hand and seal

Sd. Illegible.

The 29th March, 1853.

Officiating Collector.

After 1850 a fifth form came into use. Under it the lessee executed a *Kabulyat* with clear terms and conditions of the lease. A specimen is given below :

"Kabulyat no. 2.

Bill no. 73 of Block XX Calcutta.

I do hereby acknowledge to have received a pattah for holding no. 73 of Block no. XX of the South Division, measuring (Bgs. 0—Cots. 12—Chs. 1—Sq. ft. 0). No bighas twelve cottahs one chittack no square feet, bearing the House Assessment no. 14 Waterloo Street and assessed at an annual rental of Co's Rupees 2.4.2½. Rupees Two.—annas four—pies two and a quarter—and I give this document as a *kuboolcut*, consenting to pay the above annual jumma on or before the 30th April in each year and I do further agree

that should any one hereafter prefer a claim to the parcel, for which a pattah has been granted to me, I shall be liable to action in a court of law, and that the pattah shall be considered null and void, if any other party should prove his right to the land, before a competent court.

Dated this 7th March, 1853.

Sd. John Bodry".

The latest available pattah is dated 10 September, 1900 and is reproduced below :

"Pattah no. 10100

Bill no. 155  
Calcutta.

A pattah is granted to Ganesh Chandra Das and Srimati Rebati Dasi for Holding No. 146 of Block no. XIV of the South Division, measuring (nil Bigs. 2 cots. 8 chs. 27 sq. ft.), nil bighas two cottahs eight chitaks twenty-seven square ft., bearing the municipai no. 119 of the Colinga Bazar Street bounded as below, and assessed at an annual rent of Rupees— $\frac{7}{8}$  annas seven and pies eight, only payable on the first day of the year for which it is due.

Calcutta Collector's office.  
The 10th September, 1900.

Given under my hand and seal  
Sd. Illegible  
For Collector."

(ii) *Some interesting pattahs or leases*

(1) *Play-house*

The Company could sell, grant or let out common (Khas) lands to applicants "for building or other purposes". And Millet in his Minute at p. 72 mentions a case in which on 18 November 1776 Government granted two pieces of waste land to Thomas Lyons to erect "a range of buildings for the accommodation of the junior servants of the Company". Subsequently they were transferred to Richard Barwell, who had a habit of getting grants *benamee* as he himself admitted in his letter to his sister. The memory of Lyons survives in *Lyons' Ranges*, the road and buildings in the rear of the Secretariat or Writers' Buildings designated by the "range of buildings". The Play-house mentioned in the pattah was created in the previous year by a subscription from the leading members of Calcutta Society by pattah no. 27 dated June 1, 1775. And the subscribers were, inter alia, Warren Hast-

ings, Richard Barwell, Chief Justice Elijah Impey, Justices Hyde, Chambers and Lemaistre. The land for the play-house comprised 5 *bighas*, 19 *cottahs* and 12 *chittacks* ground situated in Bazar Calcutta. It originally belonged to John Carlier. Rent was Rs. 17-13-3 sicca per annum and the pattah no. 27 was signed by Henry Cottrell, Collector in the Cutcherry of the Calcutta Division on the 1st of June, 1775.

## (2) *Writers' Buildings or Bengal Secretariat*

A transcript of the pattah is given below :

"A pattah is hereby granted unto Mr. Thomas Lyons for the purpose of erecting a range of buildings for the accommodation of the junior servants of the Company for two pieces or parcels of waste ground to the north of the Great Tank, the Court-house, and the new Play-house and separated by the great road leading from Mr. Holwell's monument by the south front of the Court-house to the Salt Water Lake, and known by the name of Great Bungalow Road, agreeable to the annexed plan of the said two pieces of ground which are distinguished by the red colour, bounded by the red lines A.B.C.D. in no. 1 and E.F.G.H. in no. 2 and are of the following dimensions—

No. 1 in Dhec Calcutta lying to the southward of and parallel to the Great Bungalow Road, is a regular piece in length from east to west or D to B 214 yards and breadth from north to south or from B to A 35 yards, containing *six bighas and four cottahs* of the Hon'ble Company's Coomar or untenanted ground, the rent sicca rupees 18-9-7 per annum.

No 2 in Bazar Calcutta, lying to the northward of the same road, the side GE parallel to the road is in length 214 yards, the opposite side HF is in length 218 yards, the east end GH is in breadth 92 yards, and the west end EF is in breadth 69 yards, containing *ten bighas thirteen cottahs and eight chittacks* of the Hon'ble Company's Coomar or untenanted ground, the rent sicca rupees 32-0-5.

The boundaries as follows—To the eastward or from C to H, a road of 60 feet width parallel to the west front of the Court-house and the angle at H to be cut off, so as to leave the road in that part of it at the same breadth of 60 feet till its junction with the north road. To the westward or from A to F, a line

drawn from the west end of the Play-house at right angles with the Great Bungalow Road. To the south or from C to A, a road of 15 feet wide leading from the north-east angle of the railing of the Great Tank towards the old Fort, parallel to and at the distance of 35 yards from the Great Bungalow Road. To the northward from F to H a road 52 feet wide leading from the south railing of the play-house by Mr. Huggins' House to the China Bazar.

The Great Bungalow Road, 100 feet wide, passing in its present direction between B and E the west end, and D and G the east end of the said two pieces of land, a line drawn from Mr. Holwell's monument to pass through the middle of the road.

To preserve the uniformity and prevent nuisances permission is given to Mr. Lyons to rail in the manner described in the place by the yellow colour and lines those two pieces of land which terminate to the westward of the two pieces granted to him.

In the Cutcherry, of the Calcutta Division, this eighteenth day of November, 1776."

Richard Barwell was the Collector from June to August 1773 and became a Member of the Council in 1770. He owned the Writers' Buildings and let it out to the Company at a rental of two hundred Arcot rupees per mensem for each set of apartments numbering 19. He executed a registered deed of trust dated 15 June, 1787 in favour of Sir Elijah Impey and Joseph Cator as trustees for his infant sons. A description of the same two pieces of land appears in the trust deed as follows :

"All those two several pieces or parcels of ground situate, lying, and being on the north side of the Great Tank in the town of Calcutta, containing by estimation 16 bighas 17 cottahs and 8 chittacks (it is 6 bighas 4 cottahs plus 10 bighas 13 cottahs and 8 chittacks), as the same two several pieces of parcels of ground are therein described to be lying and being intersected by the great road leading from Holwell's monument by the south front of the Court-house ; to the Salt Water Lake and bounded to the eastward by a road running parallel with the west front the Court-house ; to the westward, by the road running parallel to the walls of the old Fort ; to the southward by a road of fifteen feet leading from the north-east angle of the railing of the Great Tank

towards the old Fort ; and to the northward by a road leading from the south railing of the Play-house by the house then in the occupation of James Huggins, Merchant to the China Bazar and also all that new row or range of buildings there lately erected and built upon the most northern of the two said several pieces of land containing 19 messuages or tenements or separate sets of apartments with the out-houses thereto belonging then let or rented to the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies by virtue of a certain indenture of lease, bearing date on about the first day of September then last part for the term of four years at a monthly rent of two hundred Arcot rupees for each set of apartments.”<sup>14</sup>

### (3) *Company's servants as pattah-receivers*

In early days the underlings played ducks and drakes with the Company's property—they appropriated the loaves and fishes. Thus in 1765 the Commission of Clive, Sumner and Verelst observed : “Every spring of the Government was served with corruption, principles of rapacity and oppression prevailed and every spark and sentiment of public spirit was lost and extinguished in the abandoned lust of universal wealth”. Nearly, every servant of the Company owned valuable property in Calcutta under pattah from the Collector. A few cases are mentioned below :

- (i) In 1761 Peter Amyatt, the Collector of Calcutta got a pattah no. 346 for 285 bighas and 6 cottahs of ground described as *ryotti tikkah*, coomar, and potit zamin in “Parish” Chitpore etc. in the paraganah Amirabad, on a rental of Rs. 253-3.
- (ii) In 1763 Sundry parcels of ground were granted “*rent-free for ever for pious uses*” to Shake Manoolah, Jemadar of the Collector and his widow was able in 1767 to sell her house and compound in Sootanuttee for Arcot rupees.
- (iii) During the period from 1758 to 1768, a number of grants was made to Lazarus D' Oliviera with the footnote, “the rent is excused, being Cutcherry servant” written by M. Collet, Zamindar. Thus a pattah was granted to him “rent-

free for ever for pious use to make a tank in Molungah, New Govindpore. In 1763 he was again granted a pattah of 18 bighas 16 cottahs in Mirzafore at an annual rental of Rs. 3 per bigha "as an indulgence a return" was made of him of Rs. 2 per bigha per annum. In 1768 the fire work mehal farming licence was granted to his brother Anthony D' Oliviera.

- (iv) In 1768 George Vansittart was granted a lease to be held by him so long as the Company would not need it, of 631 bighas, 11 cottahs and 8 chittacks of ground situated in dheer Birjee and Chakraberia on a rental of Rs. 789 per annum. This pattah covered the site of the Bishop's Palace and the adjoining properties. And this property was sold by Vansittart to Charles Short, who established a bazar on it and this is remembered now by Short's Bazar Street.<sup>15</sup>

(4) *The grant of an English lease to Raja Nob Kissen Bahadur in perpetuity*

There was what was called "Talook Sootanuttee", which was a permanently-settled estate under Regulation I of 1793 of Sootanuttee. In 1769 the talook of Noapara in Murshidabad was granted to Raja Nob Kissen Bahadur as "Deb Shewul". However, this resulted in litigation with the former talookdar who got a decree in his favour. The Company therefore agreed to give the Raja other property as compensation and it was ultimately decided to grant him Sootanuttee etc. And at the suggestion of the Raja "An English lease was granted him in perpetuity". A transcript of the form after shortening the deed is shown below :

"This Indenture made the 28th day of April in the year of Christ 1778 between the United Company of one part and Maharaja Nob Kissen Bahadur of Calcutta of the other part.

Whereas the Hon'ble Warren Hastings Esq. Governor-General, Richard Holwell, Phillip Francis and Edward Wheler Esq. Councillors of the Presidency of Fort William acting on the part and behalf of the said United Company in the Government of the said Presidency have by their certain instrument in writing bearing date on or about the 16th day of January now last past called a *Company's Dewanny Sunnud* in the Persian Language under the Dewanny seal of the said United Company and sign manual of

the said Warren Hastings given and granted to the said Maharaja Nob Kissen by the "Title and description of the high and powerful Maharaja Nobkissen Bahadur the talookdari of the several villages of Sootaloottee, Baugh-bazar and Hogulcundy situate lying and being in Calcutta (containing the several markets or bazars of Sootaloottee, Hat Sootaloottee, bazar Sootaloottee, Subahbazar, Charles bazar and Baughbazar together with Hogulcundy and excepting thereout the two bazars called Rambazar and Rajabazar) in exchange for the village of Nowparah and certain other villages formerly the estate of the said Maharaja Nobkissen to take place from the beginning of the 11th day of April, 1777. He doing his part what is proper and customary for the benefit of the said tallokdari, conducting himself upon the principles of *justice*, behaving himself as to secure the *satisfaction* and *content* of the *ryots* and other inhabitants and punctually paying a fixed annual rent of sicca rupees 1237-13-10 (exclusive of the Chowkidari tax) as in and by the said grant or sunnud relation being thereunto had may appear.

Now this Indenture witnesseth that the said United Company for the consideration (for the presents) and in consideration of the sum of *five Arcot* rupees to them in hand paid and of the rent covenants and agreements on the part and the behalf of the said Maharaja Nobkissen, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns to be paid, observed, fulfilled and kept have demised, given and granted and by these presents do demise give and grant unto the said Maharaja Nobkissen Bahadur, All that the talookdari of the several villages of Sootaloottee Baughbazar and Hogulcundy situate lying and being in Calcutta.

And to hold the said talookdari with its appurtenances and the rents, issues and profits thereof and of every part thereof from the said 11th day of April 1777 unto him, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns forever yielding and paying yearly into the said United Company, their successors or assigns or to the Governor-General and Council of the Presidency of Fort William on the part and behalf of the said United Company the yearly rent of sicca Rs. 1237-13-10 pies over and besides all payments, by monthly payments or oftener.

Provided that if the said yearly rent of sicca Rs. 1237-13-10 shall be behind or unpaid by the space of one full year next, then

it shall and may be lawful to and for the United Company upon the same premises to re-enter and repossess the same and enjoy as if these presents had never been made.

Provided also that if the Maharaja, his heirs executors, administrators or assigns do or shall at any time extort and receive or enforce the payment from the ryots and tenants of the said talookdari, then (they) shall forfeit and pay to the said United Company by way of fine for the offence, three times the amount so taken.

Warren Hastings

L.S.

P. Francis

Richd. Barwell

L.S.

Edwd. Wheler.

Scaled and Delivered at Fort William in Bengal.

Geo. Hodgson.

Isaac Baugh.<sup>15</sup>

#### (f) *The nature of the pattah-interest*

The tenancies created by pattahs were more or less *Istimrary* *Makrari* tenancies. The word *Istimrary* means 'permanent, perpetual' in respect of a tenure or lease of land or other immovable property. Such a tenure or lease may or may not be heritable. The words '*mukrari istimrary*' do not in their logicographical sense primarily imply any heritable character in the grant as the term *mourasi* does, but they imply permanency from which in a secondary sense such heritable character might be inferred. It is doubtful whether they meant 'permanent' during the lifetime of the persons to whom they were granted or permanent as regards hereditary character. Hence, the words do not *per se* convey an estate of inheritance : *Kamakhya v. Ram Raksha*.<sup>16</sup> Cottrell, the Collector and also the President in 1776 stated in evidence before the Supreme Court : "Pattahs in this form convey an *absolute property*, which he (tenant) may dispose of, but subject to the rent, and in Calcutta, to renewal every ten years". In case occupied lands were required for public purposes, the Government had to indemnify the occupiers. Thus when the inhabitants of Calcutta and Govindpore were dispossessed owing to the erec-

15. Sterndale, *op. cit.*, 45-6, 75-80.

16. AIR 1928 PC 146; A. R. Biswas—Encyclopaedic Law Dictionary (2nd edn., 1982), 40<sup>c</sup>.



tion of the present Fort William, they received other lands as well as pecuniary compensation. Later on large purchases were made for the improvement of the town through the agency of the Lottery Committee (1793).

The Company's pattaahs conveyed "absolute title in the Calcutta lands" and this is evident from a Case of *Freeman v. Fairlie*<sup>17</sup> in which the Chancellor Lord Lyndhurst in the Court of Chancery observed : The East India Company when they convey Common land in the way stated without without executing any deeds of lease or release, or any conveyance, besides authorising the Collector to issue the *pattah*, consider that they are conveying the *absolute property* in the soil. In several instances (they) after making grants of this description have been desirous of having the land back again for raising public works and they have purchased it back from those considered the owners of the soil at a very large prices". Some decisions<sup>18</sup> of the Supreme Court at Calcutta are given below to explain fully the nature of the pattaah-interest.

(i) In *Doe dem Ram Canto Paul v. Goddadhur* Henry Cottrell, President of the Committee of Revenue produced before the Supreme Court the register of pattaahs granted during the period 1769-1774 and gave evidence thus : "Pattaahs in this form convey an absolute property to the grantee, i.e., a property he can dispose of, but subject to the rent, and in Calcutta, to renewal every ten years. The Collector cannot annul the acts of his predecessor, but he has judicial authority to examine into grants and to annul them in proper cases. Upon order from the Governor and Council he may annul any grants or pattaahs".

(ii) It appears from Hyde's notes dated 28 November 1775 and 15 January 1776 that on an application by the defendants to the Collector, they complained of an injury being done to them by the grant of a pattaah to the complainant, since the concerned ground adjoined the road and intervened between their house and the road, the Collector vacated the pattaah. But the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Impey held that "the Company's Collector could not *revoke* a pattaah granted of lands within Calcutta".

17. (1828)1 M.I.A. 305.

18. Sterndale *op. cit.*, 37-9.

(iii) In Hyde's notes dated 12 February, 1776 there is a mention of a case of *Doe dem Ram Paul & another v. Goury Seal* in which the Chief Justice and all other Judges unanimously held : "In cases where it was necessary and the proper course of conveyance to have a pattah we would not admit any other title : (we) say you must go and get a pattah".

(iv) Hyde's Notes dated 10 February, 1778 reveal that in a case of *Gower Hurry Podar v. Tilluck Seal* Chief Justice Impey with Hyde J concurring observed : "A pattah is necessary to complete a title. It resembles a title by copy of a court roll and if a man has a right to have a pattah and on demand the Company refuses to grant it, we would upon a bill being filed compel them to grant a pattah. The bill of sale is only an equitable title not completed by legal conveyance. Before the defendant's title can be supported he must get a pattah."

(v) In Hyde's notes dated 16 January, 1779 there is a case of *Doe dem Rajah Huzoorimull & ors. v. Cassinath*. In it the plaintiff in the ejectment proved possession under an execution in the late Mayor's Court. This put the defendant to show a better title. And the defendant was stated to have a grant from the Company. At the time he could not produce the *pattah*. At this the Chief Justice remarked : "Then you can prove nothing unless you can give an account why you do not produce *pattah*".

#### (g) *Settlement and redemption*

The amount realised from the ground rents of Town Calcutta has never been a very large sum, nor does it appear to have materially varied from the earliest times to the present day.

#### (i) *Total demand, area and population*

In Todar Mull's Rent Roll (as in Abul Fazle's *Ain-i-Akbari*), "*Mahal Kalkatta*" together with two other mouzas, viz, Govindpore and Sootanuttce paid in 1582 a land rent of Rs. 23,905. In 1762 the ground rent was Rs. 17,745. In 1819 the demand was Rs. 19,624. In 1885 it came to Rs. 25,647, of which Rs. 19,915 represented the fixed revenue, the remainder being the rent of temporary settled holdings. The total demand of ground rent was Rs. 10,967 in 1944-46. In 1965-66 it was Rs. 10,297 and

Rs. 10,478 including the arcars was collected. Holwell in his statement of the town rents in 1752 gives the following account :

Ground rent received on—

	<i>Bighas</i>	<i>Cottahs</i>
Dhee Calcutta	1,704	3
Sootanuttee	1,861	5½
Govindpore	1,044	13½
Bazar Calcutta	560	2½
John Nagore	228	1½
Bagh Bazar	57	17½
Lall Bazar	10	9
Santose Bazar	5	8½
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	5,472	0½
Ground occupied by the Company and others ..	733	0
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total of the Company's ground ...	6,205	0½

Taking the rent as given by Holwell at 3 sicca rupees per bigha, we have Rs. 18,605 as the equivalent of Company's Rs. 19,845 of the present day. In 1965-66 the total area subject to the ground rent came to 5.75 sq. miles or 2223 bighas, that is, about one-third of the area in 1752. Correspondingly the revenue also came down to Rs. 10,297. At present there is no temporary settled holding under the Calcutta Collectorate.<sup>19</sup>

The growth of Calcutta in area and population may be seen in the following figures. By 1698 the area was 3 miles in length and one mile in breadth with an annual revenue of Rs. 1,282-60-0. In 1701 the area measured 1700 acres with a population of 10,000. The area increased in 1717 when 38 villages were added to it. In 1801 Calcutta had 5000 acres with a population of 1,40,000. In 1901 population came to 10 lakhs. In 1951 the acreage was 18,868 or 29.48 sq. miles. With the addition of Tollygunge (by the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951) having 4,761 acres or 7.44 square miles, the area became 23,629 acres or 36.92 sq. miles. To this may be added (1) the canal area of 278

19. *Ibid.*, 46-7.

acres of 43 sq. miles and (2) the Fort area of 551 acres or 86 sq. miles. Hence the grand total is 24,458 acres or 38.21 sq. miles. The 1971 census excludes (1) and (2) and gives the total area as 23,629 acres. In 1951 the total acreage was 18,868 with a population of 25 lakhs. In 1951 the acreage became 23,629 with a population of 31,41,180.<sup>20</sup> It may be noted that this is not the Company's Calcutta.

(ii) *The working of Acts XXIII of 1850 and VII of 1876*

There had been no law before the passing of the Land Registration Act VII of 1876 for compelling the proprietors to register their names when lands changed hands. So the register of demand was not upto date and the Collector or Etmamdars knew little about the rent-payers. The inevitable result was that the realisation of ground rent was attended with difficulties. The process of distraint without the legal sanction entailed the Collector in facing heavy weather. Thus Richmond Thackeray, the Collector of Calcutta, was apprehensive of his action. And the process was legalised by the Calcutta Land-revenue Act XXIII of 1850. The Collector of Calcutta was vested with two-fold powers. Sec. 3 empowered the Collector to levy his demand "by distress and sale of the goods and chattels". Secondly, u/s 10 he could "punish any contempt committed in his presence in open *Cutcherry* or office by fine not exceeding 200 rupees and in default of payment, by imprisonment in the common jail for one month". Besides, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was barred u/s 12 in respect of the ground rents. The position and prestige of the Collector improved.

An idea of how the Collectors managed the collection of ground rent after the passing of Act XXIII of 1850 may be had from para 5 of the Collector of Calcutta's letter no. 81 dated 20 May 1855 addressed to the Commissioner of the Nadia Division :

"A second notice was then issued to each proprietor or his agent on their failure to pay the ground rent inviting such persons to produce pattahs, ground rent bills or other documentary proof of previous assessment and all those who

20. Long, J.—Calcutta and its neighbourhood. Introduction by S. Sen-gupta (ed.) 1974, vii.

could prove by any of the above the fact of former assessment the previous rate of jumma was upheld. But this only in case where the bill was in the owner's name or in the name of such person or persons from whom the present owner could prove having derived a fair title, and also that ground rent has been paid by the owner within 6 years previous to the promulgation of the Settlement Act, and in default of such proof being filed the holding was settled at the new legal rate of -/3/- annas per cottah unless the records of the Collectorate furnished undesrved credible information on the holding having been formerly assessed".

A report on the working of the Act was also submitted to the Legislative Council. The then officiating Collector in para 5 of his letter no. 143 dated 8 August, 1855 wrote to the Clerk of the Legislative Council thus : "The assessment of the old rate was made in conformity to sec. 1 of the Act and it empowered the Collector to demand the legal rate only from such land the former rent of assessment of which land could not be ascertained". Unlike the Bengal Tenancy Act XV of 1885, the Calcutta Land Revenue Act XXIII of 1850 has no provision for increasing the rent of a holding except when excess land is found in it. The holdings are considered permanently settled and in letter no. 44 dated 14 January, 1854, Government observed that *redemption* should go hand in hand with *settlement*. Act XXIII of 1850 may be called the Permanent Settlement Act of Calcutta. This may be supported by an extract from the Commissioner of the Presidency Division's letter no. 90 R.L. dated 26 May, 1876 :

- "All lands in Calcutta belonging to private persons which had not been assessed before 1850 were u/s 1 of Act XXIII of that year assessed at the uniform rate of 3 annas per cottah. These estates are therefore rightly described as *permanently settled estates*, as the law leaves no room for enhancement of rents. Among the permanently settled estates referred to in the first table annexed to para 5 of this office no. 153 R.L. dated 29 June, 1875 were the holdings which have been assessed before the year 1850 included. It is impossible that some of them are not legally protected from an increase of assessment, but as no such increase has ever been proposed or contemplated during the past 16

years, the settlements of those are considered permanent and it would be inadvisable for Government to raise the question”.

Many a revenue-free tenures in Calcutta and lands exempt from assessment for 60 years were declared valid *lakhiraj* u/s 2 of Act XXIII of 1850. The names of owners, rents and other particulars of the holdings were recorded in the bill-registers of the different blocks. The entries in that registers were subsequently transferred to the General Register A when the Land Registration Act of 1876 came into operation. It may be noted that sec. 4 provides for four kinds of registers : A—a general register of revenue—paying lands ; B—a general register of revenue-free lands ; C—a *mouzarawari* register of revenue-paying and revenue-free lands ; and D—an intermediate register of charges affecting entries in the general and *mouzarawar* registers. Sec. 12 of Act XXIII of 1850 declared “the ground rents payable from lands in Calcutta Revenue within the meaning of the Act of Parliament, 21 Geo. III, cap 70 (Act of Settlement, 1781).” The total revenue collected on account of land registration by the Collector of Calcutta was Rs. 14,412 in 1964-5 and Rs. 10,807 in 1965-6.

### (iii) *Redemption*

The realisation of the ground rent was not found profitable and Govt. began to think of redemption. The first proposal to introduce the scheme of redemption of ground rent was mooted in 1808. Frauds were discovered in the Pattah office as to the grant of pattahs. Other abuses were detected in the Calcutta Collectorate (vide Advocate General's letter dated 29 September 1810 to Government). Meanwhile the Sadar Board recommended the discontinuance of the grant of *pattahs*. But this was fraught with difficulties, since there would be no register to note the conveyances and the consequent ground rents payable. To get over this difficulty the Board proposed redemption of ground rents in Calcutta at 15 years' purchase. Paras 7 & 8 of the Sadar Board's letter dated 22 August, 1808 made this clearer :

“As far as Govt. is interested in having a register of revenue payable by the different proprietors in the town of Calcutta

we beg to propose a measure by which the necessity of such a register may eventually be obviated. We would propose that the sale of ground rent be authorised and we are persuaded from the enquiries which we have made that the inhabitants generally would readily purchase the exemption from the tax and they would be glad to redeem it at a higher price than its actual value, according to the present interest of money. We recommend that the Board of Revenue be authorised to dispose of the tax to all persons who may be willing to redeem it at a rate of 15 years' purchase".

This proposal was submitted by Government to the Court of Directors in a Despatch dated 15 September, 1808 with a suggestion for the more extended adoption of the same principle. The Court, however, did not favour the proposal as is evident from their reply dated 29 January, 1813 : "The proposition appears to us in many respects objectionable and we direct that no step be taken by you for the purpose of carrying it into effect".

The Governor-General in Council passed a Resolution on 6 April, 1819, which authorised the Sadar Board to permit redemption of ground rent in Calcutta at 15 years' purchase of the gross rental. An extract from the Resolution runs thus :

"The gross amount of these rents being less than Rs. 18,000 collected at an expense of 13% it is plain that the disposal of the mahal is a matter of little or no moment, financially speaking with reference, however, to the vast number of persons from whom the collection is made amount to (9,766) and trouble with which the collection is attended, it will certainly tend very essentially to the public convenience to discontinue the collection".

However, the Governor-General in Council thought it proper to confine the scheme strictly to the ground rents in Calcutta and hoped that the Court would acquiesce in its adoption. Hence, he authorised the Board to dispose of the rents to persons willing to redeem them at 15 years' purchase. The Court came to know the scheme of redemption in Calcutta from Govt. letters dated 30 July 1819 and 16 March, 1821, paras 73-76. And they in their Despatch no. 31 dated 18 February, 1824 replied as follows :

"The reasons in your letter dated 30 July, 1819 and the correspondence of the Board of Revenue possess considerable weight and induce us no longer to insist upon our prohibition of this measure, though the same end might be attained and in our opinion advantageously, by farming for a term of years, a system which in case like this, seems but little exposed to abuses. We cannot omit expressing dissatisfaction that you should have proceeded to authorise a measure in contravention of our express orders in a case in which no adequate inconvenience can have arisen from the delay required for previous reference."

Accordingly, the Government in their Resolution dated 25 June, 1824 directed the Board to report the extent of the redemption of ground rents in Calcutta and send their opinion on the Court's plan of farming the rents. It was found that during 1819-23 only 11 holdings had been redeemed. The result was thus disappointing and in accordance with the instructions of the Court of Directors the plan of permanent redemption of ground rents in Calcutta was withdrawn by Govt. Resolution dated 25 August, 1824. It was announced by the Board of Revenue's Notification dated 18 January, 1825 that "until further orders all persons holding ground rent at fixed rent or assessment within the city of Calcutta shall be allowed to redeem the rent payable by them and shall be accordingly exempted from the payment of rent during the following terms of years and at the following rates :

"For 10 years	..	at 7½ years' purchase
15 "	..	" 10½ " "
20 "	..	" 12½ " "
25 "	..	" 14 " "
30 "	..	" 15½ " "

The rents payable by the lessees and pattahdars of Panchannagram were also allowed to be redeemed on the above terms with the proviso that the period of redemption should in no case exceed 20 years.

The plan, however, evoked little response from the Calcutta "proprietors", who did not avail themselves of the opportunity



of redeeming their rent for 30 years at 15½ years' purchase. Moreover, there had not been any important correspondence on the subject till 1843. At this time one Barrodaile applied for redemption of his rent on 22 April, 1843. Owing to inadvertence of the Govt order of 1824, the Board forwarded the application with their recommendation for a redemption at 15 years' purchase price in their letter no. 198 dated 6 June, 1843. The Government, however, considered the price to be insufficient and declined to accord sanction to the application in their letter no. 657 dated 26 June, 1843. Accordingly the matter was dropped.

The introduction of the redemption system in Chittagong in 1851 drew renewed attention to its existence in Calcutta and Panchannogram. Hence, the Government in their letter no. 1074 dated 4 November, 1852 stated to the Board that the arrangement for permanent redemption recently made in Chittagong might be extended to Calcutta and the Settlement operation then in progress offered an opportunity for carrying out this arrangement, but the rate of composition might not to be less than 15 years' purchase. The Board was requested to report on this ; it was sent to the Collector especially to report if the proprietors would be willing to redeem their lands at 20 years' purchase. The latter in his letter no. 131 dated 9 August, 1853 replied that the public opinion 'was decidedly against the proposed measure and recommended that the proposition be dropped. The objections raised by the people were as follows. *Firstly*, it was not a profitable investment since the redemption at 20 years' purchase would fetch only a 5% return on the capital outlay, as compared with 8% return available elsewhere. *Secondly*, the majority of the proprietors in the North Division were too poor to pay the price of redemption. *Thirdly*, the proprietors were apprehensive that the redemption would be liable to future taxation in some other form. *Fourthly*, the wealthier proprietors held that the acts of one Govt might not be binding on another and that the Company as a farmer to the Queen had no power to permit redemption. *Finally*, "the redemption of lands might be a means of introducing the abuses of the Zamindary system in Calcutta . the rich proprietors would soon either by purchase or by encroachment or fore-closure of mortgages possess themselves of the majority of the land, and this, once the case, would open a door

to innumerable methods of oppression and injustice". In this context the Board suggested the postponement of the consideration of the subject until the completion of the Settlement.

Heysham and his establishment at the time were engaged in the collection of rent in addition to their Settlement duties. The Govt. again raised the question and suggested that redemption should go hand in hand with the settlement and expressed its readiness to permit redemption at 15 years' purchase, deducting the expenses of collection amounting to 25%. The redemption at 15 years' purchase would give the Govt. a ready money payment equal to 20 years' purchase of the net revenue. The Board was thus requested to go ahead with the proposal; but they expressed doubts. However, since the Govt. had pronounced it to be desirable, they requested the Commissioner to instruct the Collector accordingly. In a meeting at Maharaja Prasanna Kumar Tagore's house the wealthy proprietors resolved that the redemption of land should not go on without an Act from the Legislative Council, legalising the grant of the proposed *sanad*. Till 1867 only 515 holdings out of 11,484 had been redeemed. Lord Canning, the first Viceroy proposed in his Minute of 17th October, 1861 a general scheme of redemption of land revenue both for permanently and temporarily settled estates at 20 years' purchase of the annual assessment, but it was not sanctioned by the Secretary of State. The main objection raised was that it would sacrifice the Govt. interest. It was manifest from its Despatch No. 14 dated 19 July, 1862 that "Govt. would find itself in the embarrassing position of having its Treasury overflowing with money arising from the capitalisation of its annual income, which it would have no adequate means of employing or investing".

The question of redemption again cropped up in 1867, when Govt. wanted to know the reason of the different rates in Calcutta and the Muffusil—15 years' purchase rate in the former and 20 years' in the latter. The Board explained that the Calcutta rate was fixed as an inducement to the proprietors so as to do away with the expensive establishment for collection. They recommended that the special privilege of redemption in Calcutta and Panchannogram might be withdrawn after 6 months' prior notice. Accordingly Govt. in their order No. 5123 dated 7 September, 1867 withdrew the concession and ordered the redemp-

tion at 20 years' purchase. Formerly under Govt. order No. 688 dated 30 June, 1852 proprietors of resumed revenue-free tenures assessed with an annual *juma* of less than one rupee were allowed to redeem the revenue in perpetuity at 10 years' purchase in Chittagong. In 1873 it was found that only 13,770 petty estates had been redeemed, but the saving in the cost of collection amounted only to Rs. 384. This drew the attention to the rate of redemption in Calcutta. And the Govt. of India sought an opinion from the Lt. Governor of Bengal if it was advisable to continue the permission to redeem at 20 years' purchase. It was ultimately decided to raise the rate to 20 years' purchase under Govt. order No. 3339 dated 24 December, 1873 in respect of Chittagong, Chinsura, Sylhet, Calcutta and its suburbs. And Govt. extended the privilege of redemption at 30 years' purchase to the tenures in the Govt. estate of Baranagore in 24-Parganas in their letter No. 1173-T dated 17 November, 1880. Further Govt. wanted to know if 30 years' purchase could be taken as the standard of future cases of redemption in Calcutta and Panchannogram. At this the Collector of 24-Parganas reported that Govt. having gained little or nothing by the redemption was entitled to lay down its own terms. Accordingly the rate was raised to 30 years' purchase by Govt. order No. 375-167—L.R. dated 9 February, 1881. Subsequently it was raised to 15 years' purchase. The position may be summed up thus : upto 1867—15 years' purchase ; in 1867—20 years' purchase ; in 1871—25 years' purchase ; in 1881—30 years' purchase ; in 1938—35 years' purchase. Rule 244 of the West Bengal Govt. Estates Manual, 1953 provides for redemption of rent in Calcutta, Panchannogram, Baranagar and Sahiban Bagicha in the 24-Parganas by proprietors of permanently settled holdings at one payment of 35 times the amount. On redemption the holdings were removed from Register I and entered in Registers 36, 39 and General Register B, Part I and the alteration noted in Register 40.

From the Return No. IX of the Land Revenue Department for the year 1945-46 it is evident that 92 holdings had been redeemed upto June, and 6348 holdings still remained to be redeemed. However, it appears from the Board of Revenue's memo. No. 22651 K.M. dated 27 November, 1959 that Govt. decided not to permit redemption. As a result, Rule 244 was deleted.

The result was that those who had applied for redemption should be refunded their deposits and old cases should not be re-opened.<sup>21</sup>

*(h) Subdivision of holdings and registration of lands*

The subdivision of holdings was allowed in Calcutta. This increased the number of holdings in the revenue roll. The practice appears to have been introduced in 1855 with the sanction of the Divisional Commissioner. In 1875 the Collector of 24 Parganas voiced his objections to the minute subdivision of holdings in Calcutta in his letter No. 8—R dated 3 April, 1875 thus : "No subdivision of holdings (should) be permitted if the area of each separate portion be thereby reduced to below 5 cottahs unless all the owners choose to redeem the rent by payment of the usual fee". He suggested that a subdivision fee of half per cent should be levied on the estimated value of the land, over and above the *puttah* fee. The Commissioner in his letter no. 231 R—dated 11 August, 1875 wrote to the Board : "I agree with the Collector that minute division of holdings should not be allowed. I see no reason why the Board's view in the case of Panchannogram should not be strictly applied in the case of Calcutta. In a letter to the Collector one of my predecessors in November 5, 1870 wrote : 'As regards subdivisions of the rent and issue of fresh *puttah* the Board of Revenue have lately ruled that this is not to be allowed unless the parties are willing to redeem'".

The Board in their letter no. 587—A dated 10 December, 1875 approved the above proposal and issued orders thus : "No subdivision of holdings in Calcutta be permitted if the area of each separate portion be thereby reduced to below 5 cottahs unless all the owners agree to redeem the rent by payment of usual fee". A fee of half per cent as proposed by the Collector was also approved. In 1882 an application for subdivision was forwarded to the Board with the recommendation that individual proprietors of less than 5 cottahs might be allowed to have their share subdivided if they agreed to redeem it without calling on other share-holders to redeem their interest in the holding. And

21. Sen, C. C.—A peep into the Calcutta Collectorate (1947): a typescript copy, 48-5?

the Board approved this proposal in their letter no. 1791—A dated 3 November, 1882 addressed to the Commissioner of the Presidency Division. Rule 245 of the West Bengal Govt. Estates Manual, 1953 runs thus : “In Calcutta no sub-division of a revenue-paying holding, which creates a holding of less area than 5 cottahs, will be recognised or registered. But on the redemption of the revenue a holding of less than 5 cottahs will be recognised, and provided that the share of revenue of the applicant is redeemed, it is not necessary to insist on redemption by the remaining co-sharer”. This applied to Panchannogram and Baranagar.

For issuing demand notices, it is necessary to maintain the D Register in which the names of proprietors, i.e. owners of holdings in possession are duly recorded under the provisions of the Land Registration Act, 1876. It will not be out of place to give an account of how this Act came into being. Sec. 3 of Act XXIII of 1850 provides that the ground rent of a holding in Calcutta can be realised from the occupier, in case the owner refuses or neglects to pay it after a demand notice is served on him. However, this rule was not strictly followed. Instances came to the notice of Schalch, member of the Board of Revenue in 1875, in which rent was realised from the occupier without any attempt being made to realise it from the owner. The Board thus in their letter no. 44A dated 16 September, 1875 drew the attention of the Commissioner to this irregularity with a direction to strictly observe the rule. James Mackenzie, the then Dy. Collector of Land Revenue, Calcutta admitted this irregularity in his letter no. 103 dated 4 December, 1875 to the Collector of 24-Parganas. He explained that this was due to change of ownership of lands owing to inheritance, gift or sale and there was no law that could compel the proprietors to register their names in the Collector's books. The Collector of 24-Parganas forwarded this letter to the Commissioner with his letter no. 460-R dated 19 January, 1876 and supported Mackenzie and suggested that the difficulty might be overcome by the ‘Registration of titles Bill’ then before the Bengal Council. The Board in their letter no. 59-A dated 11 February, 1876 directed that the question be raised after the passing of the Bill. The Collector of 24-Parganas in his letter no. 312-R dated 14 September, 1876 suggested that the proprietors could be compelled to register transfers if “tenures” in the Cal-

cutta were brought within the definition of "estates" given in sec. 3 of the Act VII of 1876 (Land Registration Act). An extract from his letter is given below :

"As transfers are constantly taking place, the registers cannot be permanently kept up to date in the absence of a legal obligation to register such transfers. Such obligation would be created if the Board should bring the tenures in Calcutta within the definition of estates under Act VII of 1876 by directing that they should be separately registered in the General Register A, a subsidiary register being kept for the purpose and this course seems on the whole admissible".

The Commissioner recommended the above proposal of the Collector in his letter no. 275 R.L. dated 14 October, 1876 and the Board authorised the Collector to register the tenures in Calcutta separately in Register A in their letter no. 450-A dated 21 October, 1876. The Collector of 24-Parganas at the suggestion of Mackenzie proposed to keep Register B (Parts I and II) also in Calcutta and the Commissioner supported this in his letter no. 414 R.L. dated 26 January, 1877 to the Board : "The Collector proposes to open Parts I and II of Register B for the registration of revenue-free lands in Calcutta. This proposal may be sanctioned in order to bring the revenue-free lands under registration". And the Board in turn sanctioned this proposal in their letter no. 33-A dated 1 February, 1879.<sup>22</sup>

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHAMELEON COLLECTOR

If Job Charnock is to be considered the founder of Calcutta as a seat of trade, Hastings may be regarded as the founder of Calcutta as the political capital of the British Empire.

—W. K. Firminger : *Fifth Report* (Bengal portion), 1917 at 233.

The British dominion in India was not only established in the country but recognised as one of its great powers. That dominion had to grow greater if it was not to become smaller. In this sense Hastings can be called the real founder of the British dominion in India. He found a revenue administration and he left a State.

—P. Spear : *A history of India*, vol. II (Penguin, 1970), 92.

In the olden times the office of the Collector of Calcutta combined with it the duties of the Collector of Customs, of Excise (*Abkari*) and of Income-Tax. The duties of the Collector of customs were first separated and a new office created when the Governor-General of India ceased to be the Governor of Bengal and the Bengal Presidency began to be administered separately. This happened in 1854 when F. J. Halliday became the first Lt. Governor of Bengal. In 1918 the Collector of Calcutta was relieved of his duties as Collector of Income-Tax. And in 1924 a separate post of the Collector of Excise was created to relieve the Collector of Calcutta of his excise duties.

A : “*Collector of Calcutta Town duties*”

#### (1) *Background*

Kautilya in his *Arthasāstra* deals with trade and tolls on goods carried into cities. Merchandise when brought into a city or exported from it had to pay a duty at the city-gate. The rate was generally 10 per cent ad valorem, but for articles such as grains, oil, sugar, cloth, yarn, wood, bamboo etc. it was 4 to 5 per cent and for comparative luxuries like flowers, fruits, dried fish, it was higher. This levy on goods of the country was really of the nature

of an excise-duty charged on home-manufacture or more correctly a combination of excise and income-tax. Strictly speaking, only the levy made on foreign goods or goods exported to foreign countries was of the nature of customs proper. The expression, 'customs duties' means, strictly speaking, the taxes issued upon goods passing from one country to another. The levy of this tax was claimed as based on 'custom' or practice from time immemorial, which in Europe is believed to date so far back as the history of ancient Greece. Customs duties were levied in England by Ethelred who established duties on ships and merchandise to be paid at Billingsgate in the port of London about 979 A.D.

During the Mughal administration imports on trade and transport in three forms had been well-established, namely, on home-made goods; foreign goods and goods exported to foreign countries. These imports were included in the general account of *Sayer* which meant the variable revenue from movable property as contrasted with *Mal* or land-revenue. The inland revenue was levied by Government at the Capital City, while customs duty on foreign trade at the royal ports. Besides, there were transit duties called *Sayer Chalanta* levied through the zamindars and accounted for in the land-revenue paid by them. The rate was 2½ per cent. Grant in his *Analysis of the Finances of Bengal* Minute dated 26 April, 1786) states that during the Subahdarship of Shujauddin (1728) the revenue from *Sayer Buksh Bander* (export and import, customs, foreign merchandise) amounted to Rs. 2,21,975, while that from inland customs amounted to Rs. 3,11,603. After the "Revolution" in the wake of the Battle of Plassey, the Mughal revenue showed a progressive decline in proportion to the growing importance of the Calcutta port. The Company had already established on their own account a port-duty at Calcutta at the rate of 4 per cent ad valorem on foreign imports and 2 per cent on "inland imports". According to Grant this duty was levied originally "to defray the expense of pilotage up and down the river Hooghly". But later it was claimed as being founded on the "ancient factorial rights" of the Company at Fort William. It was noted by Grant that on the 5 years ending with 1784-85 the expenses of pilotage amounted to Rs. 71,431 only per year, whereas the gross receipt was Rs. 4,38,923, "leaving a clear pro-



duce of Rs. 3,66,492" per annum. In 1783 the Moghul *Sayer* dwindled to Rs. 62,644, while the Company's revenue from their own duty rose to Rs. 3,32,496. A distinction was made between the two levies,— the former was "Govt custom" or duty levied in the capacity of a sovereign power, whereas the latter was the custom or port-duty of Calcutta levied in virtue of the Company's supposed "ancient factorial rights". After the Dewany (1765) the position of the Company was peculiar. According to Shore (Minute dated 18 June, 1781, para 131) they were "merchants as well as sovereign of the country. In the former capacity they engrossed its trade, whilst in the latter, they appropriated the revenue". Under the two Acts of Parliament passed in 1767 and 1769 the Company had to pay £ 400000 per annum to the British Exchequer. The actual payment, however, upto 1788 was £ 3,161,451.<sup>1</sup>

During 1765-88 there was the two-fold charge of "Govt Customs" of 2½ per cent on trade and the "Town Duty" of 2 per cent on imports into the City of Calcutta. There was further the levy of a 4 per cent export-duty on these goods when exported from the Calcutta port. The *Sayer* levied by the Zamindars for transport in the interior and on the shops, *bazars* and *gunjas* was also continued. The evil effects of this multiplicity of taxes were brought out by the Parliamentary Committee's Report in 1783. Grant in his Minute of 1786 pointed out that the double charge of "Govt Custom" and "Town Duty" at Calcutta was "unconnected and wholly unnecessary" even from the Company's revenue point of view. The Govt Custom of 2½ per cent on imports at Calcutta was abolished in 1788 and in 1790 the zamindari *Sayer* was also done away with. Regulation XLII of 1793 consolidated the rules then in force regarding customs. It declared that merchandise could be carried from one place to another within the Company's territories duty-free except goods imported into Calcutta for which the special Calcutta duty of 4% had to be paid. By Regulation XXXIX of 1795 the import-duty levied as "Calcutta Custom" was replaced by the "Govt custom" at 2½ per cent (abolished in 1788) both for import and export. By Reg. I of 1797 this rate was raised by one per cent to defray the expenditure incurred on account of the armed force maintained for

1. Gupta, M. N.—Analytical Survey of Bengal Regulations (1943), 303-8.

protection of the commerce. But certain country products like raw silk, indigo etc. were exempted. Reg V of 1801 re-imposed the Calcutta customs or Calcutta Town Duty which had been abolished by Sec. 2 of Reg. XXXIX of 1795. It was an import duty of 4 per cent. Goods brought into Calcutta from the interior of the country were specified for the levy of duty. They included raw products as tobacco, *pan*, betel-nut, raw silk, but not grains. Manufactured articles included *ghee* oils, gold, silver, stone plates, sugar, indigo etc. The rate for piece goods was 2 per cent on cotton and cotton yarn. *Ganja* and spirituous liquor had special rates. Reg. XI of 1801 extended the Govt. custom at Calcutta to "goods exported from Calcutta into the interior of the country and goods imported into Calcutta from the interior of the country". The rate was 3½ per cent.

Regulation XVIII of 1806 provided for levy of toll on boats passing through the Eastern Canal (Tolly's Nullah) of Calcutta and canals called Banka nulla, Kunjapore khal, Gowal khal and Narainpur khal round Calcutta at the rate of 4 annas per oar or 4 annas per 100 maunds of bottom. In case of paddy, rice etc. Re. 1 per 100 maunds bottom was the rate. The rates for ferries across the canals were as follows : a foot passenger—5 gandas, with load—1 pun of cowries ; a bullock—2 puns ; a palanquin with bearers—4 annas ; sheep and goats etc—1 pun of cowries each. Act XXII of 1836 abolished the imports on Tolly's Nullah ; while the rest were abolished by Acts V of 1864 and 1 of 1873. Reg X of 1810 consolidated the Govt customs and Town Duties and laid down one set of duties called Town Duties to be levied on certain specified articles imported into Calcutta. The rates were—2½ per cent on grains (paddy, rice, wheat and barley) ; 5 per cent on *dal*, oil, betel-nut, oil-seed, sugar, turmeric, charcoal and firewood ; 10 per cent on *ghee* and tobacco. All these collections were in the direct charge of "the Collector of the Govt customs" who was also styled "Collector of the Calcutta Town Duties". The limits of Calcutta were also laid down for the purpose :

On the North—from Dum-Dum bridge to Baranagore, then across the Hooghly river to the Bally khal ;

On the West—the high road from Hooghly to Sangral, through Sulkea, Howrah, Sibpur, to Col. Kyd's premises at Sibpur, then

across the river to Mucwa colah, then along the road to the new Garden Reach Road ;

On the South—south-easterly to include the town or hat of Ballia, to Tollygunge including *gunje* ;

On the East—from there to "Ballia ghat" on the Saltwater Lake and then as in a line to Dum-Dum bridge.

There were two *Chowkies* or outposts—one at the mouth of the Bally khal ; and the other at Kidderpore ghat. There were other chowkies at other entrances to the city.

This was modified by Regulations XVII of 1810, II of 1822, LX of 1826 and ultimately repealed by Acts I of 1833, I of 1834, XIV of 1836 and XVI of 1874<sup>2</sup>

## (2) *The Collector's duties*

In olden times one of the principal duties of the Collector of Calcutta was the collection of the town duties. From Holwell's accounts an idea as to these duties may be had. Regulation X of 1810 permitted Collectors to farm out the collection of the Town duty for 12 months or longer at the discretion of the Board. But the rules of farming did not apply to Calcutta, where the Collector himself was in direct charge of the collection. Under Regulation V of 1803 the Collector was given an extra perquisite at 5 per cent—9/10ths for him and 1/10th for his Deputy. About the farm, the *gunge* or Mondy bazar of *Govindpore* may be mentioned. The articles on which a duty was levied at the *gunje* were rice, paddy, gram and other grains ; as also on tobacco, ghee, mats, poultry, bay leaves, threads, beads, cloth, oil, gunnias, coposs, seeds, betel-nut-exported. In short, the import was on every article coming within the denomination of "common food or common necessities of life".

## *Sootanuttee market and Subu Bazar*<sup>3</sup>

The Sootanuttee market was held twice a week, namely, on Thursdays and Sundays and a duty was collected by the

farmer, viz :	Chunain shops ;
Retailers of cowries ;	Tobacco shops ;
Cotton theread ;	Firewood shops ;

2. *Ibid.*, 309-13, 324, 331-2, 335, 339-41.

3. *Sterndale, op. cit.*, 47-52.

Apothecaries' shops ;	Straw shops ;
Oil shops, Hardware ;	Mats ; bamboos ; braziers ;
Tyar ; Milk ; Jaggree ;	Betelnut ; greens ; sugarcane ;
Sweetmeat ; Smiths ;	Plantain ; tamarind ;
Silversmiths ;	Fish mongers ; Roasted rice ;
Betel ; cucumbers ; Trees	Potters ; cloth ; shoemakers.
Weavers ; Salt ; Rice ;	
Venison ; paddy.	

These articles had no established rule : "from one *gundah* of cowries to 6 pund per diem on each shop, bundle, bag or piece, according to the different value or species of goods". This commission with others formed a portion of the Collector's *perquisites*. In October 1779 one Hajee Mustapha claimed exemption from the payment of 5 per cent commission on the sale of a house. But the Governor-General in Council, Warren Hastings directed that the Hajee could not be exempted from the tax unless he could prove that he was a subject of one of the 3 nations—English, French, and Dutch—enjoying freedom from taxation. The Board, however, recommended the abolition of this tax on the natives, but the Governor-General in Council did not agree to it. Colebrooke, one of the Collectors claimed the right to reserve the collection of the 5 per cent commission and the fines payable on the renewal of the pattahs in Bhitar Simla and Bazar Calcutta. But the Board turned this down in the light of the "exchange settlement" with Rajah Nobkissen. The exchange referred to was the grant of Bhitar Simla and Bazar Calcutta in exchange for his lands at Ishapore taken by the Govt for the erection of the Powder works. The various town duties and farms were collected by the Company in virtue of their "ancient factorial rights". They were charged on all goods imported or exported into or from the town as well as on all shops, trades, manufacturers and sales of articles.

An attempt was made prior to the sack of Calcutta (1756) to levy as town duty a commission of 5 per centum on sales of European houses. The European inhabitants resisted this import so much that in 1757 the Court of Directors ordered its relinquishment, "assuring all the inhabitants of Calcutta that we have a tender regard for their ease and do therefore consent that the said duty be laid aside". However, this tax was levied on the

Natives, Armenians and Portuguese. The Hampden who took the most prominent part was a Captain Durand whose insolent behaviour amounted to "a contempt of authority". So the Directors "deported him with the ships of the season" from the settlement. The "town duties", as observed by Bolts, "included a duty on licences to marry at the rate of 3 sicca rupees per party" and also a percentage on the sale of "slaves (and) sloops and boats". But the records had been missing. Besides, all grains brought into the *gunje* or public granaries, the necessities of life and many other articles brought to the bazars or public markets in Calcutta had to pay a duty on importation and the Collector superintended their collection. The handicraft trades were likewise farmed out by the Collector who collected certain sums from the licencees and from others a part of their daily wages.

It had been customary in those days on a Collector assuming office for the members of the *demi-monde* to present a *Nazarana* or *salamy*. George Gray, the Collector refused to accept more than a nominal sum, "for which he made an adequate return" and desired to collect the duties, so as to erect and maintain with the proceeds a "lock-hospital"—an institution he "considered very necessary in the interests both of the women themselves and the inhabitants of the settlement". This drew an acrimonious correspondence between Lord Clive and George Gray in 1765, and the latter submitted resignation, as noted earlier, because of the former's disapproval of the levy on women.

However, it appears from *Holwell's Interesting historical events* that the following were the principal farms :—

The glass-maker's farm	1738	The dammer and oakum	1746
„ vermillion farm	1738	Dec Calcutta and Govindpore's burdened oxen	1738
„ caulkers' farm	1738	Dec Calcutta and Bazar Calcutta's ferry boats	1738
„ tobacco shops' farm	1738	The fireworks farm	1738
„ bang shops' farm	1738	The Chinaman's farm	1752
„ chestmakers' farm	1748	The timbers' farm	1752
„ red lead lapis tutiae (vitriol) farm	1746	Old iron, tea, cattys, and old nails	1751

There was also a duty levied on the following at the rates specified—

Piece goods	..	at 2 per cent
Sale of boats and sloops	..	.. 5 „ „
Sale of slaves	..	Rs. 4-4 each
grant of pattahs	..	„ „
Arbitration bond, salishnameh	..	20 pounds of cowries.
Commission on recovery of debts	..	(not stated)
General releases	..	8 annas
Mortgage bonds	..	Rs. 5 per cent
Marriages		Sicca Rs. 3.
Russey salamy (measurement of holdings)	..	Rs. 1

Salamy on new-built sloops, 50 to 100 according to burden. Moorianneos—

Duty on export liquors	..	Rs. 2-4 per leager.
Licence for a treat	..	Not fixed.
Order for beat of drum	..	One cowand and one pund of cowries.
Duty on export of rice	..	1 sear 8 chittacks per maund.

*Etlack*

Fines.

The *etlack* fees were court fees for summons, arrest, distrains, imprisonment, and the like. On every complaint registered in the cutcherry a peon was ordered on the defendant in cases of debt, or on the delinquent in cases of assaults or other abuses. The peon received 3 pounds of cowries per diem, 1 pund 14 gundas of which were brought to the credit of the Company under the head of *etlack*. 1 pund was the peon's fee and the remaining 6 gundas were set apart. Out of the latter the moories or writers were paid their wages and the surplus called *moorianneos* was sequestered to uses.

The remaining source of income had been the fines. The duties, however, varied from year to year. The office records show the following farming licences and the principal town duties as were prevalent in 1763 and thereafter and their yield.

I: *The farming licenses in 1763*

- No. 1 of 1763—the farming license of the glass-makers to *Ram Kisno Ghose* for one year for sicca Rs. 900.
- No. 2 „ „ —the farming license of 5 per cent commission on the sale of sloops and boats and *salamy* on new boats to *Monohur Mookerjee* for sicca Rs. 1,050.
- No. 3 „ „ —the farming license of fireworks to *Moyendry Barutgar* for Rs. 970.
- No. 4 „ „ —the vermilion mahal to *Narain Samunto* for sicca Rs. 750.
- No. 5 „ „ —the Mehol of red lead and vitriol to *Fokeer Chundutt* for sicca Rs. 260.
- No. 6 „ „ —the farm of bang shops to *Baburam Ghose* for sicca Rs. 4,000.

II. *The Mehals in 1765*

- No. 1 of 1765—the *shair* of Belliagautta on all goods imported or exported at the rate of 13 cowries per rupee for Rs. 525. Farmer's name illegible.
- No. 2 „ „ —the *shair* of all the bazars and markets to *Gopee Nath Ghose* for 3 years for 1,100 Arcot rupees per annum at 13 cowries per rupee.
- No. 3 „ „ —the privilege of getting customary fees for marking (1st April, 1765) the bulls for funeral ceremonies conferred on *Ramesore Samroot Gope*.
- No. 4 of 1765—the farming license of glassmakers to *Bebooram Ghose* for sicca Rs. 860.
- No. 5 „ „ —the vermilion mahal to *Jugger Nath Halder* for sicca Rs. 830.
- No. 6 „ „ —the license of red lead and vitriol to *Jugger Nath Halder* for sicca Rs. 860.
- No. 7 „ „ —the license bang shops to *Andeeram Biswas* for sicca Rs. 4,300.

No. 8 of 1765—5 per cent commission of sloops and boats to *Issunderam Chuckerbutty* for sicca Rs. 1,400.

No. 9 „ „ —the license of fireworks to *Cally Churn Singh* for sicca Rs. 825.

No. 10 „ „ —one cowree per diem on each shop as an alms (31st July, 1765)  
for the maintenance of the beggars to *Nemoy Churn Dass Birjobassy Fakeer*.

### III. *The mehals in 1768*

The mehals to be granted in farm was listed in 1768 as follows :

#### (a) *Settlement list of mehals*

Shair Balliaghattach	Export on sundry goods at 13 cowries per rupee
Mahals	Mooty
Golay Magoon	Mundy Connah upon the roads
Cotty Sallamy	
Joy Cottah	Towbazzary
Mundy Connah	Arrack
Noya Sokto	Bang
Coyally	

#### (b) *12 Mehals*

Gaut Pugladangah Mehal	Coyally
Fish Mehal	Noya Sakto
Maler	Towbazzary
Crabs	Export on sundry goods at 13 cowries per rupee
Dongah	Mockaltollah's fish mehals
Goloy magoon	Mooty
Cotty Sallamy	Arrac.
Joy cottah	Bang
Mundy Connah	



(c) 16 *Mehals*

The mehals to be granted in farm was listed in 1768 as follows :

The farming license No. 1 of 1st March, 1768 of the Pugladanga shair and under gaut of Noyaputty/Baluaghatah was granted to *Kishno Chunder Sarmah* for 3 years for Rs. 713-12-9 per annum with right to collect at the rate of 13 cowries per rupee on all exports and imports.

R.B.C.G. (Richard Bucher, Collector-General).

The farming license No. 2 of 1st March, 1768 of Shair Ballia-ghatah and Joy Cottah to *Kishno Cunder Sarmah* for 3 years for Rs. 586-10-9 per annum to collect such duty as per regulation granted him from the cutcherry. Calcutta Collector's cutcherry.

R.B.C.G.

The farming license No. 4 of 1st May, 1768 of Sootanuttee market Towbazzary granted to *Nub Kissore Roy* for Rs. 570 per annum with right to collect at 13 cowries upon each shop.

Besides, there were other  
farming licenses.

R. Beecher.

B. *Collector of Excise*(1) *The Abkari Regulation*

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (300 B.C.) devotes a whole chapter on the vending of liquor. There used to be a Superintendent, who was to "carry on liquor-traffic not only in forts and country parts, but also in camps". And the vendors had to pay 5 per cent as toll. During the Moghal period the manufacture and vending of intoxicating liquor and narcotic drugs formed an item of taxation under the head *Abkari*. The word is derived from Persian 'ab' = water and 'Kari' = manufacture. There is no mention of 'Abkari' in *Ayeen-i-Akbari* (1603) and the *Kotwal* was directed to prohibit drinking, selling and buying spiritous liquors. In one place it is stated : "Whenever His Majesty is inclined to drink wine, trays of fruit are set before him". There were 3 varieties of intoxicating liquor : (1) liquor from molasses or sugar and in hilly areas, from *Mahua* flowers ; (ii) *tari* or toddy from palm-tree or coconut-tree juice ; and (iii) *pachwai* from fermented rice.

The mixed system of *Abkari* administration—*Abkari* mixed with *sayer*—was continued for some time after the Company took over the *Dewany*. In 1790 the authority of the zamindars to levy and collect the *Abkari* duty in the interior was taken away and the Company directly assumed this authority. And this is sometimes called "*resumption of Abkari*". A uniform set of rules was promulgated and these were later incorporated in Regulation XXXIV of 1793. It was ordered that the *Abkari* or tax on spiritous liquor would be collected on behalf of Government. *Secondly*, the manufacture and sale were restricted to specified towns and villages and to only licensed individuals. *Thirdly*, certain daily rates of duty, varying per still (each still to have capacity of not more than 50 seers) were also laid down—6 annas, 12 annas and Re. 1-4 according to the class of the locality. Reg. VI of 1800 expanded the previous rules regarding the sale of intoxicating drugs such as *ganja*, *bharg* or *subjee*, *majoom*, *banker* etc., restricted their sales at specified towns and villages and imposed a license fee of Re. 1, 12 annas, 8 annas and 4 annas, per diem, according to the class of the place selected. Toddy was explained as the juice of *tur* (palm), *Khejur* (date-palm), and *nurcal* (cocoanut) trees. The tax of 25 per cent on the rents for tapping imposed by Reg. XXXIV of 1793 was retained. This was the general plan till 1813, when Reg. X of the year introduced the system of "Sadar Distillery", i.e., a large scale distillery whence liquor would be issued. The general plan of *Abkari* administration as noted above continued during the Regulation period. However, long term leases, not exceeding 5 years, of duties leviable on the manufacture and sale of spiritous liquor (also *turi*, *pachwai* and drugs) were introduced by Reg. VII of 1824. *Abkari Darogas* were appointed to assist the collector in the supervision of the retail shops.

Meanwhile another development took place. The country stills produced liquor by crude methods. So, some Europeans started distilleries on the English method with wash-stills, coppers, tonns, butts, coolers and vessels, in the vicinity of Calcutta. The liquor produced was of a more refined sort and for exportation. Sec. 33 of Regulation VI of 1800 exempted distilleries of rum, *arak* and other varieties of spirits conducted by Europeans or their descendants for exportation and not for sale within the country from the *Abkari* tax. But Reg. II of 1802 removed

this preference to exportation and a duty of 6 annas per gallon London proof was imposed. A drawback of a moiety of the duty i.e. 3 annas per gallon was allowed when the product was exported by sea. For retail sale in the country a further duty at the rate of 4 annas and 3 annas was charged: The Act now in force is the Bengal Excise Act V of 1909. The Collector of Calcutta administered this Act till 1924.

During the Moghul period *Akbari* formed a part of the revenue derived from *Sayer*. Before the acquisition of the *Dewany* the total of the *Sayer* revenue was about 9 lakhs and *Abkari* probably did not exceed 3 or 4 lakhs. During the Company's administration it rose steadily and between the years 1823 and 1828 it ranged between 15 to 20 lakhs a year and in 1857-58 it was as much as £ 7,94,244 or about 80 lakhs of rupees. The latter 24-years thus recorded a tremendous rise. Prohibition in those days was unknown in the country. The position in the other countries of the world may be noted here. In the USA a crusade against liquor was started after the civil war and the first legislation for "prohibition" was adopted in the State of Maine in 1851. Several other States followed Maine. Thereafter came the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1919, that declared the whole country a "dry" territory. However, illicit manufacture and traffic followed and eventually the 21st Amendment to the Constitution in 1933 repealed the 18th Amendment. In Russia *Vodka* was once prohibited by the Czar, but the Revolution in 1917 restored it. Again during the regime of Mikhail Gorbachov it has been prohibited (1985-89). Temporary prohibition was adopted in Canada about 1916; but now inordinate drinking is restricted by strict Govt. regulations.

In this country drinking habit since the middle of the 19th century became very extensive amongst all classes of people. It became a fashion with the educated people and many a genius like Michael Madhusudan Dutt became its victim. At this time the theory of "maximum revenue with minimum of consumption" developed. A revulsion of feeling came with the dawn of the 20th century. Compared with other Provinces Bengal could boast in 1935-36 that it was the most "temperate". The number of excise shops was only one per sq. mile and excluding the industrial areas the average was not more than one per 200 sq.

miles. The liquor mostly in use was of very low strength, 60 or 75 u.p. In 1924 a separate post of the Collector of Excise was created and the Collector of Calcutta relieved of his duties in this regard.<sup>4</sup>

## (2) *The collection of excise revenue*

The *arrack* mehal was originally a part of the town duties and collected or farmed out by the Collector. Holwell, a Collector of Calcutta referred to this liquor as *Batavia* or Armenian *arrack*. Probably it was the same as *Doasta* (i.e. DO=two and *atasha*=fire or twice-fired or double distilled). But there was also a liquor known as *Anise* which was formerly imported from Armenia and called *Armenian Anise*. It resembled the Dutch liquor *kumme*. In early times all the necessities of life and all articles of consumption used to be taxed in Calcutta. According to Bolts, many Englishmen were reported to have kept public houses in Calcutta for the retailing of the spiritous liquor, called "paria *arrack*" to the great debauchery of the soldiers. As a result many innocent tradesmen with others selling this liquor were seized on a verbal order of the Governor and confined in a dungeon in the new fort for a day or two. This was an instance of the exercise of arbitrary power on the part of the Governor. Besides, this recalls to one's mind a Sanskrit adage : "Dasanana (Ravana) stole Sita, but the ocean was made a captive". Rainey in his "Historical and topographical sketch of Calcutta" (1986) notes at page 41 that in 1766 "the *arrack* shops within the town were ordered to be leased out". The first farming license for *arrack* which Sterndale could trace out was No. 3 of 1st May, 1768. The farming license for *Choomar Mehal* or *arrack* farm in the dhee Chitpore was granted to Annuntoram Coondoo for sicca Rs. 867 per annum for 3 years ; and, in the "*Dowl Mohul-wary sayar*" of 1768 *arrack* was mentioned.<sup>5</sup> In 1776 it was reported by the Committee of Revenue that one Levett had a license of vending *arrack* in 1775-76 for Rs. 10,000, but he had not paid the amount. In 1790 the *sayer* duties were abolished ex-

4. Gupta, M. N.—Analytical survey of Bengal Regulations (1943). Chap. IX, 386-403.

cept the *Abkary* or tax on spiritous liquor, which came to be collected by the Collector direct.

The Justices of the Peace were empowered by sec. 159 of the Charter Act of 1793 (33 Geo. III, C. 52) to prescribe rules in respect of the retail sale of spirits within the town. In a lengthy communications of the 31st January, 1800 addressed to the Governor-General the Justices of the Peace referred to many matters that should be seriously dealt with. In the *first place*, the arrack shops were the places of rendezvous of robbers, thieves and the like, who used "cant terms and phrases to prevent suspicion" at their meetings. The persons frequenting these shops were—(1) *Dakait*s or gang robbers; (2) *Bunbutteas* or river thieves; (3) *Girra cuttos* or cutter of knots corresponding to pickpockets; (4) Burglars; (5) Stealers of cows and bullocks; (6) Coiners and utterers of counterfeit money; and (7) Cheats and swindlers. Besides, there were receivers of stolen goods, namely, (a) petty shroffs and poddars; (b) *sonars*; (c) Portuguese, Armenian and Bengali auctioneers; (d) native watch-makers; (e) Kellaunee wallahs or Oakum sellers; (f) Keepers of paikarry shops; (g) Bickreewallahs; (h) Washermen; (i) Ruffogurs or darners and menders of shawls; (j) Keepers of old cloth shops (chiefly seekhs); and (k) Workmen, lascars, manjees, bearers and domestic servants.

*Secondly*, the Magistrates wanted regulations to discipline the punch-house-keepers. The cheapness of spiritous liquor, toddy and intoxicating drugs led to drunkenness. There were 11 European—Portuguese, Italians, and other foreigners—punch-houses licensed by the Magistrates. Besides, Europeans and others opened eating lodging-houses for reception of seamen and other Europeans. Billiard tables were kept in these houses and spiritous liquors sold there in the name of beer, lemonade etc. *Thirdly*, to check the vice of drunkenness amongst the lower classes of the natives and prevent the thieves, robbers and vagabonds from frequenting the shops, it was suggested that duty be raised for retail sale of spiritous liquor and the vendors be asked to give security and enter into penalty bonds to obey the police regulations. *Fourthly*, it was recommended that the distillation of spiritous liquors be pro-

hibited within the town and the license fees in the neighbourhood be raised. On an average 85 retail licenses were issued monthly and each vendor paid Rs. 1-8 a day for his license and sold the common arrack at the rate of one anna and a half per quart. But the toddy-vendors were under no restriction. Such shops numbered 300 and the monthly sale was estimated at Rs. 5,460. *Fifthly*, it was suggested that these shop-keepers should take out licences. This would also apply to the vendors of *ganja*, *bhang*, *mudut* and other intoxicating drugs. And the number of shops was calculated at 108 and the fee proposed was one rupee per day for each shop. The estimated revenue from these shops was as follows : (1) License duty on spiritous liquors—Rs. 1 lakh ; (2) license duty on toddy—Rs. 30,000 ; (3) license duty on drugs—Rs. 15,000.

Reg. II of 1802 was the outcome of the above representations of the Magistrates of the town. In another letter dated 20 October, 1803 to the Secretary to the Govt the Magistrates pointed out that retail vendors of spiritous liquors were licensed at Rs. 5 per day and permitted to dispose of 12½ gallons of liquor per day and an additional duty of 4 annas per gallon levied on all the spirits beyond that quantity. These shops were not permitted to open before sunrise or to be kept open after sunset. Vendors of toddy and ganja were licensed at 8 annas per day and subject to similar restrictions. European punch-house-keepers were required to furnish daily reports of their lodgers and of all persons frequenting their houses. The following first-rate hotels and taverns were then in existence—The London ; the Harmonic (occupying the present police court building) ; the Unjon ; Wright's Newtavern (near St. John's Church) ; the Calcutta Exchange, the Crown and Anchor (the present exchange Buildings) ; Beard's Hotel ; Moor's Tavern (in Dacre's Lane) ; and Monsieur Le Gallais' Tavern, famous for public breakfasts and masonic banquets. The collection of tax on the manufacturer of spirits at the distilleries according to the European method may be ascertained on a reference to Reg. II of 1802.

In 1818 the Collection of *Abkary* duties was as follows :  
Rs. 2,17,286 *minus* commissions and charges

11,805 for

"

"

Net *sicca* : 2,05,481.

## European distillery—

Rs. 63,787 *minus* commissions and charges

Rs. 13,930 for

"

"

Net sicca = Rs. 49,857

At this time Justice Blaquiére was in charge of collection. Commissioners of Revenue and Circuit were empowered by a Regulation of 1828 to control the collectorship of Customs and Town Duties with effect from the 1st March, 1829. However, Calcutta remained an exception and continued under the Board of Customs, Salt and Opium. By Reg. XXVI of 1845 the powers vested in the Justices of the Peace to grant and withhold licenses for the sale of arrack or other spiritous or fermented liquors were taken away and the Governor of Bengal authorised to appoint *any person* for the job. At the time a Dy. Collector, D.W. Fraser was in independent charge of the Calcutta Collectorate—he was an uncovenanted Dy. Collector who exercised all the powers of the Collector. Act XI of 1849 was passed to repeal so much of sec. 159 of Statute 33 George III. Cap 52, Regulation II of 1802 and Act XXVI of 1845 as related to the sale of *arrack* or other spirituous liquors. It placed the Collector of Calcutta in charge of the collection of this revenue subject to the control of the Commissioner of Abkary and the Board of customs, salt and opium. The Collector of Calcutta at the time was J. H. Young, a covenanted Civilian. By rule of 1849 the general superintendence of the Abkary mehal was vested in the Board of customs, salt and opium. Govt. letter no. 652 dated 9 July, 1850 shows that one Louis Jackson had been appointed to officiate as Collector of Revenue and Stamps and Superintendent of Abkary in Calcutta during the absence of J. H. Young. Thus a new title came into use, namely, the Superintendent of Abkary.

In 1782 orders had been passed prohibiting the sale of spiritous liquors within 10 miles of Calcutta, but this was superseded by an order of 1790. It has already been noted that duties on spirits and drugs originally formed part of the *sayer* or internal duties. And these were reserved by Government when the *sayer* was abolished by a notification dated 28 July, 1790 of the Governor-General in Council. By a notification dated 19 April, 1790 it was ordered that "no person shall in future make or vend spiritous liquors without a license from the Collector and

no tax shall be levied except on the part of the Govt." A further notification dated 7 February, 1791 formulated the regulation of making spiritous liquors and the taking of licenses, especially exempting Calcutta from the operation of the rule. By the eighties of the 19th century, the excise revenue was derived from country spirits, under the heads of licenses on shops for the vend of liquor, still-head duty, and distillery fees. There were 3 public distilleries at Kidderpore, Manicktolah and Sulkea, where spirits were distilled after the country method. Besides, there was one distillery conducted on the English method of distilling rum and spirits of wine and this belonged to the old firm of M/s. Ahmuty & Co. at Shibpore in Howrah. The remaining portion of the revenue was obtained from duty on rum, imported wines and spirits, tari or toddy, opium and its preparations, mudut and chunduganja mejun, sidhi sabzi or bhang and charas : from fees for hotels and grogshops and shops for the sale of the above articles. The annual excise revenue of Calcutta amounted to about 19 lakhs of rupees,<sup>6</sup> of which over 10 lakhs were derived from Country spirits and 3½ lakhs from opium.<sup>6</sup>

### *C : Collector of Stamp duties*

#### *(1) Statutes on Stamps*

One of the principal duties of the Collector of Calcutta is the issue of stamps and the collection of stamp revenue. Stamp-duty was an innovation introduced into this country by the English Company. It was a method of taxation adopted in the European countries much earlier. The Dutch Government had offered a reward for the invention of a tax which would press lightly upon the people and yet yield a considerable revenue to the State. As a result they introduced this system as early as 1624. It was adopted in English in 1694 by Act 5 Wm & Mary C. 21. The issue of stamps was first instituted in 1797—clauses 12 and 13 of Reg. VI of 1797 provided for the appointment of "Superintendent of the Stamps" to issue stamp paper and keep accounts of the same. He was subject to the Board of Revenue and required to take an oath on his appointment. But fees on petitions and plaints etc. during the trial of suits seem to have been first

6. Sterndale op. cit., 56-61.



levied in 1745. And the preamble to Reg. XXXVIII of 1795 introducing this levy explained the reason for this imposition thus : "No expense attending the institution of suits in the first instance and no fees whatever being charged on the exhibits and papers filed in the courts, nor on petitions presented to the courts, many *groundless* and *litigious* suits and complaints have been instituted against individuals and the trials of others have been protracted by the filing of the superfluous exhibits, or the summoning of witnesses whose testimony was not necessary to the developments of the merits of the case. The idea was to have a uniform rate of one anna per rupee, *ad vallorem*, for suits upto Rs. 50 and then the reduced rate of half-anna upto suits of Rs. 200 and thereafter gradually reduced percentages from 3 to  $\frac{1}{4}$ , per cent as the value of higher ones. The same rates applied to petitions of appeal. For petitions after institution of suits the rates were : 4 annas where value was less than Rs. 200 ; 8 annas where value was above Rs. 200 ; and one rupee where the case was appealable to the *Sadar Dewany Adalat*. The same applied to every exhibit and for every witness summoned. All these fees were realised in cash and it was not till 1797 that the levy was directed to be realised in Stamp as Stamp-duty. However, the levy of the fee on plaints, called "institution-fees" continued to be realised in cash till 1814.<sup>7</sup> Reg. X of 1797 declared that licenses for manufacture or vend of spiritous liquors should be written on *Stamp papers* and the cost of the stamp should be in addition to the established tax. Special stamps bore words in Persian, Bengali, Hindusthani and Nagri. Abkary licenses and the stamp duty ranged as follows : 5, 10, 15, 25, 40 and 50 rupees This was abolished by Reg. VII of 1809.

Reg. VI of 1797 first introduced Stamp-duty on private documents such as original bonds (*tamasooks*), promissory notes (*teaps*) or other written obligations (bills of exchange or *hoondies* and obligations of Rs. 50 and less excepted). *Rowanas* or passes for transit of goods and *Abkary licenses* became subject to stamp-duty. It was a new kind of taxation introduced into India a hundred years after its adoption in England in 1694. The fees on petitions etc. filed in courts for copies of court papers or

those from public offices such as the Collectors and Board of Revenue were ordered to be paid in stamped paper of equivalent values. The Regulation provided that "the stamps were to be cut at the Calcutta Mint, and so as to be as little liable as possible to be counter-feited, care being taken that the impression should be durable". To guard against forgeries, the Governor-General reserved to himself power to have new stamps prepared in various shapes, and with different marks on them as often as he might judge proper. The power to alter the size of the papers and the designations of the stamps was also vested in him. The earlier stamps were simply plain uncoloured embossed impressions of the steel die.

A number of Regulations were passed in quick succession. Thus came Reg. X of 1797 that provided for payment of stamp duty on all *licences* for the manufacture or sale of spirits etc. Regulation VI of 1800 provided for levy of stamp duty on obligations for money, law papers and other documents; Reg. XLIII of 1803 for the levy of court-fees by stamps; and Reg. XIII of 1806 cautioned against forgery of stamps. Regulations VIII of 1807, VII of 1809 and XII of 1810 modified previous regulations. Reg. XII of 1812 fixed a period of 60 days from the date of execution within which all law and money papers should be stamped on pain of penalties and inadmissibility in evidence. Reg. I of 1814 was an amending regulation. Reg. X of 1814 was passed to explain Reg. I and Reg. XXVI of 1814 to modify, explain and make certain additions to Reg. I. In the 17 years from 1797 to 1814 no less than 12 regulations were passed. Thereafter there was a lull for 10 years till 1824 when Reg. XVI was passed to rescind and modify existing laws. All these laws had no reference to and were not in force *within the town of Calcutta*. They were enacted in order to raise a provincial revenue and as such they did not touch Calcutta, which was governed by the laws of England. Thus it will be found that none of the older deeds and documents executed in Calcutta in respect of Calcutta properties or suits in Calcutta courts bore any stamp.

The first Regulation that imposed stamp duties within the town of Calcutta was Reg. XII of 1826. The preamble to the regulation ran thus: "Whereas stamp duties have long been raised, levied and paid *within the provinces* subordinate to this

Presidency and it appears expedient, with a view to the improvement of the revenue from the said duties, and is otherwise just and proper that a similar tax should be levied and paid *within the town of Calcutta*". Thus the Vice-President enacted the following rules : clause II provided for the levy of duty ; clause III placed the collection of the duty under the care and management of the Board of Revenue ; clause IV provided for the establishment of a stamp office under the charge of an officer to be denominated "*the Superintendent of stamps in Calcutta*"; and clause VI provided for the appointment of one of the Company's Civil Servants as the "*Collector of Stamp Duties*" within the city of Calcutta. It was also laid down that the Collector of Stamp Duties should have an office either in the same house with the Stamp office or as near thereto as might be practiceable and that he should at all times be supplied with stamps upon indent by the Superintendent, to whom he should grant receipts in duplicate. The Collector of stamps was to select *proper persons* resident in different parts of the town for vending and distributing stamps on behalf of Government. Such persons are to be appointed at his recommendation by the authority of the Board of Revenue. They should be given a license, each under the seal and signature of the Collector. Reg. X of 1829 consolidated the existing stamp regulations. Regulations XII of 1826 and X of 1829 continued to be the law in force in relation to stamp duties for 31 years upto 1860 when Act XXXVI was passed to further consolidate the stamp laws. Clause XIX of that Act abolished the provision that only covenanted civil servants could be appointed the Collector of Stamp Duties. It authorised the local executive government to their duties and jurisdiction. Then came the Indian Stamps Act II of 1899, which is still in force.

## (2) Administration

The Collector of Calcutta is the Collector of Stamp Duties and the Superintendent of Stamps is placed under him. The office is located in the Calcutta collectorate and staffed to carry out its specified duties. The stamp revenue collected in 1964-65 and 1965-66 was Rs. 2,73,33,630 and Rs. 2,97,91,325 respectively. In 1856-57 the stamp revenue amounted to Rs. 1,45,593 and in 1884-85, it was Rs. 39,72,993. In 1952 a Revenue State Stamp Store came into existence. It is concerned with the storing of

State Stamps and their supplies to the mofussil Treasuries and Sub-Treasuries of the State. The District Collectors and Sub-divisional officers get their supplies from the Collector's Stamp Store. It may be noted that the Collector of Calcutta is the sole Agent of the Govt. of West Bengal of the Stamps. The stock of the State Stamp Store was worth Rs. 6,29,22,325 and Rs. 10,67,31,887 in 1964-65 and 1965-66 respectively.

The first Collector of Stamp Duties in Calcutta was Paul Marriott Wynch, a writer of 1808. He was appointed from 1st February, 1827 and directed by H. T. Princep, Secretary to the Govt. "to establish his office with the least practical delay". He held the office until May 1828 and was succeeded by William Popham, a writer of 1818. He continued for 4½ years and was succeeded in 1833 by Samuel George Palmer, who held office till some time in 1835. For some time in 1835 Frederick John Morris was in office. Then came Henry John Palmer who continued till 1839. H. Alexander and D. Robertson acted in 1839-40. Then came John Bensley Thornhill in 1840 and he continued till 1842. The following is the subsequent list of the Collectors of Stamp Duties—

Robert Houston,	...	1842-44
J. Cambell	...	1844
H. Alexander	...	1844-46
R. H. Snell	...	1846-47
George Augustus Chicheley Plowden	...	1847
Cecil Beadon	...	1847
C. A. Lushington	...	1847
James Henry Young	...	1850
Elphinstone Jackson	...	1851
Arthur Grote	...	1851
R. E. Raikes	...	1852
G. G. Mackintosh	...	1852
Archibold Roberts Young	...	1853
F. A. Lushington	...	1853
Henry S. Bayley	...	1855
E. T. Trevor	...	1856
Samuel Wachope	...	1856
E. T. Trevor	...	1856
C. S. Belli	...	1856
F. A. Lushington	...	1856

This completes the roll of *covenanted civil servants* of the Company who held office of the Collector of Stamp Duties under the regulations in force prior to the 1860 Act.

The first Collector of Stamp Revenue appointed under the new Act was an uncovenanted civil servant of the Govt., named George B. Hampton. He was formerly a Dy. Collector and since then the office has been held in conjunction with that of the Superintendent of Excise Revenue, Collector of Assessed Taxes and Dy. Collector of Land Revenue.<sup>8</sup>

#### D : *The Collector of Amusements Tax*

The Bengal Amusements Tax Act V was passed in 1922 and the Collector of Calcutta was entrusted with its administration in Calcutta. And his jurisdiction extended beyond Calcutta as defined in the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 so as to include the Garden Reach, South Suburban, Baranagar, Dum Dum and South Dum Dum Municipalities. At present the original Schedule I of the 1951 Act has been replaced by that of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act LIX of 1980 as amended by sec. 19 of the West Bengal Act XXXII of 1983 with effect from the 4th January, 1984. The Collector was relieved of his duties in relation to the Amusement Tax on April, 1, 1976, when the department was transferred to the Commissioner, Commercial Tax at 14, Belegata Road, Calcutta-700 015. On April 1, 1987 it was again transferred to the Commissioner, Agricultural Income Tax at the New Secretariat Building, 1, K. S. Roy Road, Calcutta-700 001. During the Collector's administration the entire area was divided into 6 zones and each was placed under one Amusement Tax Inspector, supervised by one gazetted officer of the West Bengal Civil Service. There were 90 Cinema houses and 4 permanent theatre houses. Sec. 3 of the Act fixed the rates of tax at 25 per centum. However, no tax should be payable where payment for admission would not be more than 19 paise. It was relaxed subsequently. In 1864-65 the total tax revenue amounted to Rs. 2,26,49,259 and in 1965-66 it was Rs. 2,21,10,875.

8. Sterndale, op. cit., 61-65.

### **E. *The departments of the Calcutta Collectorate***

The present-day collectorate deals with the following matters :

1. *English office*—There is a general department to deal with correspondence and establishment. The number of letters received and issued were 4330 and 2497 in 1964-65 as against 4678 and 2556 in 1965-66. There is a Record Room, having old and new Record branches. The Nazarat dealt with 15,709 and 14,338 processes/notices/warrants in 1964-65 and 1965-66 respectively. There is a branch to check the indents for stamps received from outlying Treasuries and Sub-treasuries. Besides, the Collector is the consignee of Stamp and stationeries of the Govt of India, Nasik, Poona (Maharashtra).

2. *Land Revenue and Land Registration*—This is already dealt with in Chapter V.

3. *Stamp Revenue*—This is dealt with in Chapter VI.

4. *Treasury*—The Treasury performs the functions of the Reserve Bank of India in respect of collection of revenue of certain categories. It enjoys the privilege of being the only treasury functioning as such in the State. It has two sections—(1) Treasury proper ; and (2) Accounts. The total collection in 1964-65 and 1965-66 amounted to Rs. 62,11,47,959 and 60,14,108 respectively.

5. *Reserve State Stamp Store*—earlier this has been dealt with.

6. *Amusement Tax*—This has also been dealt with earlier.

7. *Electricity duty*—The total collection on this score came to Rs. 4,80,46,019 in 1964-65 and Rs. 5,04,42,304 in 1965-66. There is only one license u/s 5(1) of the Electricity Duty Act, 1935 namely, the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation Ltd. A rebate is given to the licensee. And in 1964-65 and 1965-66 Rs. 4,80,460 and Rs. 4,64,403 were given as rebate to the licensee.

8. *Probate*—This department is concerned with enquiries u/s 19 H(3) and (4) of the Court Fees Act, 1870. The total revenue collected in 1964-65 was Rs. 1,31,532 and in 1965-66 Rs. 1,32,995.

9. *Money-lending*—This branch deals with the Bengal Money Lenders Act, 1940. Rs. 13,825 and Rs. 17,813 were collected in 1964-65 and 1965-66.

10. *Citizenship*—The citizenship certificates were issued by the Collector u/s 5(1)/(a) of the Citizenship Act, 1955. The jurisdiction covered the Calcutta Corporation area under the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951. In 1964-65 out of 5332, 4844 cases were disposed of ; in 1965-66 out of 4896, 4581 cases were disposed of.

11. *Election*—The collector was also the Returning Officer under the Representation of the People Act 43 of 1951 in respect of 7 Assembly and one Parliamentary Constituencies. Now this number is reduced because of the division of work between the Collector, the Registrar, Cooperative Societies and the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate.

12. *Balance-sheet*—The total revenue collected in the Treasury was in 1964-65—Rs. 62,11,47,959 ; in 1965-66—Rs. 60,10,14,108. Of this amount the different departments directly collected revenue as follows : 1964-65—Rs. 9,81,99,252; 1965-66—Rs. 10,25,16,597. The expenditure was as shown below :

	1964-65		1965-66
Establishment	... Rs. 4,46,461	... Rs. 4,83,174	
Contingency	... Rs. 33,891	... Rs. 35,296	
Total	... Rs. 4,80,352	... Rs. 5,18,470	

It would appear from the above that more than Rs. 10 crores were collected at a cost of about Rs. 5 lakhs.

#### F. *The Collector-Zamindar*

Of the manifold duties laid on the Collector of Calcutta, the collection of Income Tax was one. Income derived from land has always been immune from the income tax, which was first imposed in 1836, as well as from the supertax and excess—profits tax. This source of revenue steadily increased. The figures of Calcutta are not available ; but those of India are. It appears that the gross receipts in the first decade of the 20th century did not exceed £ 1,500,000.<sup>9</sup> The Collector was relieved of these duties in 1918.

The Collector of Calcutta is unlike any Zillah Collector—the former is anterior to the latter. And this unique status follows from a four-fold consideration of Statutes, Proceedings, Seals and Rents as shown below.

(i) *Statutes*—The statutes themselves provide reasons. In the *first* place, the Regulation of 11th June, 1790 by Clause 14 directed that “these regulations be not extended to *gunjas* ; huts and bazars within the limits of the town of Calcutta”. *Second*, similar is the declaration of Clause 32 of the decennial settlement of revenue dated 23rd November, 1791. *Third*, all the authorities—judicial, executive and historical—from Chief Justice Elijah Impey and his companions, followed by Chief Justices Charles Grey and Edward Ryan, Frederick Millet, the member of the Indian Law Commission to Dr. W. W. Hunter and the Legal Remembrancer, T. T. Allen are agreed that Regulation II of 1793 (the Bengal Land Revenue Regulation) did never extend to or had any force in the town of Calcutta. *Fourth*, Reg. III of 1793 (Zilla Courts) provided that “the Dewany Adawlut of Zilla of 24-Parganahs is absolutely debarred from exercising any jurisdiction within the town of Calcutta”. *Fifth*, Reg. IX of 1793 (criminal procedure) laid down that “the Magistrate of the 24-Parganahs be not considered to have any jurisdiction or authority whatsoever in the town of Calcutta”. *Sixth*, Reg. II of 1802 (Duty on spirit made in European fashion) conferred jurisdiction in the matter of drugs and spirits on Zillah Collectors except the town of Calcutta. *Seventh*, Reg. VII of 1806 established a Court of Civil Jurisdiction in the vicinity of Calcutta but debarred it from exercising any jurisdiction within the limits of the town. *Eighth*, Regulations XVI of 1812 and XXVII of 1839 provided for remedies for the execution of judgements of the Court of Requests for the town of Calcutta and the Court of the Zillah of 24-Parganahs. But these were defeated by the parties when they absconded from the limits of the town into the zillah and *vice versa*. *Ninth*, a regulation for the administration of justice in the Civil Courts of adawlut dated 6 April, 1781 provided that “the following courts of civil jurisdiction shall be established, the seats of which shall be fixed in the most populous and central towns within their jurisdiction . . . 16th . . . Calcutta”. And the jurisdiction of the adawlut of Calcutta would consist of (1) the parganah of Kishnagore and (2) the Chuckla of Hughli including Hidgallee and the



districts of the 24-Parganashs and Mahomed Aminpore. This would *prime facie* indicate "the civil court of Calcutta". But on reading further it may be found that "the courts of Dewany Adawlut donot receive or entertain any suit concerning any land, house or tenement etc. within the town of Calcutta or of any inhabitant thereof". *Tenth*, there was a theory "that in 1828 there was a district of Calcutta assessed at Rs. 65,519 included within the proposed division of Calcutta" and this referred to "the town of Calcutta". However, it may be seen that Reg. I of 1829 constituting Commissioners of Revenue and Circuit, created 20 divisions and the 18th division consisted of the districts of Backergunge, Jessore, "Suburbs of Calcutta", 24-Parganahs and Barasat. The zillah of "Suburbs of Calcutta" was created by Reg. XIV of 1814, but abolished by the Reg. VIII of 1832. Now, this zillah included Manicktolla, Chitpore, Towjeerant and Nowhazzarry, the thana of Sulkea (now covered by the Howrah Municipality) and was mistaken for the "town of Calcutta".

## (ii) *Proceedings of Committee of Revenue*

In the proceedings dated 25 April, 1786 the town of Calcutta was spoken of as a "collectorship". This meant that a *Collectorship* was a distinct charge under a *Collector*. However, this does not prove that the town was a *zillah* or that the *Collector* was the Collector of the *Land Revenue of a Zillah*. It is apparent from the President of the Board's Minute of the 13th March, 1787 : "The minute detail attending the collection of rents of the *town of Calcutta* requiring a constant and undivided attention (shows) it stands amongst the list of *Collectorship*, but I would propose that it be considered an appanage of the *khalsa* under the immediate superintendence of an assistant at a reduced establishment". And this proposal was adopted.

(iii) *Seals*—Clause 5 of the Reg. II of 1793 enacted that the *zillah Collectors* were to use a circular seal one and a half inch in diameter and to bear in the Bengali and Persian characters the inscription : "The seal of the Collector of the Zillah of ...". But in respect of the Calcutta Collectorate, the seals had been different :

1. A *pattah* dated 1764 bore in Persian character the words : "William Billa, *Collector*".

2. A pattah dated 1786 during A. Seaton's time bore in Persian : "Mohur, Chutcherry, Collectory, Calcutta, Sun 1199 Hijire".

3. A pattah dated 1790 during Edward Colebrooke's time was also similar to no. 2 in respect of the inscription.

4. After amalgamation the seal was that of the Collector of Calcutta and 24-Parganahs.

5. In 1819 the office seal was that of the Collector of "Calcutta Pattah office". But Lind wrote that the inscription should bear in English the words : "Calcutta Pattah Office".

6. There was a change of the seal to "Calcutta Collector's office"—a small oval seal of the original dimensions.

7. This was changed to a large round seal bearing the same inscription as in no. 6 with the date 1852.

8. By 1880's the seal in use bore the Royal Arms with the words, "Seal of the Collector of Calcutta".

9. In 1791 a copper coin was coined in England for the Bombay Presidency—it had the device as shown on the right-hand side. The same device was noticed by Sterndale, the Collector of Calcutta in the 80's of the 19th century in the watermark of the paper used in the office. His Assistant Siddons informed him that he had seen a seal of the office, which bore the same design as shown. It had the same design as was seen in the distillery peons' badges, viz, a heart divided into four by a St. Andrew's cross with V.E.I.C. in the quarterings and surmounted by the figure 4. The V was used instead of a U and the legend read "United East India Company". But Sterndale cannot decipher what "4 stands for". It may be noted that the equilateral triangle—4—at the top is the symbol of Trinity. The seal represented the Company's *Nishan* and the Collectorate was "an appanage of the khalsa" as considered by the President of the Board on 13 March, 1787.



(iv) *Ground rents*—Rent had been a British creation and a resultant of three contending forces—custom, competition and legislation. Formerly the cultivator paid to the king his share. Subsequently, an additional share was given to the zamindar, by whose permission the land could be cultivated. The "King's share" from the land was called 'revenue', while the 'zamindar's share' was known as 'rent'. In this light J. H. Harrington said :

"It cannot be properly said that any land is exempted from *rent*, except perhaps when the property is assigned in lieu of wages for service and even then the servant may let it and receive rent. It is preferable therefore to appropriate the words *revenue* or assessment to the land *tax*". *Secondly*, it was contended that in the collectorship of Calcutta there was a permanently-settled estate, *Sootanuttee*, bearing the Jumma of Rs. 960 borne on the revenue-roll of the Collector of Calcutta. However, it may be said that there was no permanently-settled estate under Reg. I of 1793 of Sootanuttee, nor had the Talook Sutanuttee any analogy to it. *Thirdly*, the ground rents of Calcutta had never been land revenue under the Regulations. The Calcutta holdings were not permanently-settled revenue-paying estates, nor could they be dealt with as revenue-paying estates inspite of the declaration contained in sec. 12 of the Act XXIII of 1850 and put up to sale for arrears of revenue.<sup>10</sup> *Finally*, when the West Bengal Govt. abolished the permanently-settled estates and took them over, Sec. 1(2) of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act, 1953 (Act I of 1954) set apart Calcutta. ,

The Collector of Calcutta still retains its pristine glory of being a zamindar. This peculiar status has not been conferred on the District Collectors. Thus sec. 10 of the Calcutta Land Revenue Act, 1850 empowers the Collector to punish contempts: "The Collector may punish any contempt committed in his presence in open cutcherry of office, by fine, not exceeding two hundred rupees, and in default of payment, by imprisonment in the common jail for a term not exceeding one month". Gone are the days when the Collectorate could boast of the founder of the city as its neighbour. The old Charnock Place no. 3 has been given a go-by by the zeitgeist of the century and in its place has come 11, Netaji Subhas Road. Still one loves to treasure the memories of the past and speak out with Goethe :

V-r while doch, du bist so Schon.  
(wait a little, thou art so beautiful).

10. Sterndale, *op. cit.* 71-75.

## CHAPTER VII

### POLICING AND PROVIDING CIVIC AMENITIES

Engraved upon the heart of modern society is the motto of a Bermingham bank : "He who has is !" That is not all. He who has, governs ! (The governments') persistent emergence from human weakness and collision would necessitate the establishment and operation of the State. Engels and Lenin were in gross error to believe that the "government of man" would wither away before "the administration of things".

H. Finer, *The Theory and practice of Modern Government* (1936), 36.

#### *A Prelude*

The Moghul method of administration is outlined in *Ayeen-i-Akbari*, which mentions<sup>2</sup> two officers—the *Faujdar* and the *Kotwal*. The first was to see that the zamindars did not turn disobedient or rebellious and the second to keep vigilance in town and apprehend offenders. To this end the latter divided the town into *mahals* and placed an officer in charge of each.

When the Company got the zamindari right of the free villages constituting the settlement, they emerged as the English zamindar. And the features of both became manifest in their policing arrangements as shown below

#### *B. The Company's early efforts to keep peace & order*

The English Company after settlement felt the need for policing it. So on 6 February, 1704 they met in Council at the old Fort William in Calcutta and decided to raise a watch and ward for the township. And the decision was to the effect that "one chief peon and 45 peons, two chubdars (Cibdars or Sceptre-bearers) and 20 guallis (gowlas or cowherds) be taken into pay".<sup>1</sup> This

1. Wilson, C. R.—*Early Annals of the English in Bengal* (1895), Vol. I, 240.

was the origin of the *Calcutta Police*. Subsequently, the chief peon came to be known as *Kotwal* (constable or policeman) and peons were watchmen armed with staves and spears. Already the settlement had been crowded by the end of the 17th century, because of a proclamation issued by the founder, Job Charnock. The density of the population justified that the fines imposed on "the black inhabitants" for their misconduct would be enough to meet the cost of the watch and ward as well as that of filling up the dirty pits and ditches. At that time the Company's servants had to face two menaces of fire and filth. And the police force was organised to fight both. The third menace came from thieves and robbers. Chowringhee, Chitpur, Govindpur and such like places became infested with them so that the street-walkers did not dare to move with valuables after dusk. Busteed has recorded that the native inhabitants on the road leading to Baitakhanna used to fire, in fear of dacoits, match-lock guns at intervals from 8 or 9 o'clock at night till day-break to the annoyance of the neighbouring Europeans.<sup>2</sup> Raja Ram Mohan Roy's son, Radha Prosad Roy mentioned to Rev. Long that it was unsafe to go out with a Shawl near Amherst Street in the evening for fear of robbers.<sup>3</sup> In July, 1705 a series of robberies took place in the 'black' town and there was vehement and vociferous reaction to this. Hence, it was ordered that "a corporal and 6 soldiers be sent to lodge in the Catwall's (Kotwal's) house, to be upon call to prevent the like in future."<sup>4</sup> This was the nucleus of the *town guard*. Next year an additional force of more than 30 paiks was ordered "to be organised to protect the public". During Weltden's presidentship in 1710 a regular system of night patrol came into vogue in the town. Besides, the burglars were chained and made to do manual work for the city build-up. These measures proved fruitful as reported by Weltden to the Court of Directors on 30 December, 1710.<sup>5</sup>

### C. Attempts at organisation of police

In 1720 the office of the zamindar of Calcutta was created. The zamindar appeared as plenipotentiary—he exercised very ex-

2. Busteed, H. E.—*Echoes from old Calcutta*, 157-59.

3. Long, J.—*Calcutta in olden time*, 119.

4. Wilson, op. cit., Vol. I at 266.

5. Wilson, C. R.—*Old Fort William in Bengal*, 84.

tensive powers in executive matters and possessed civil and criminal jurisdiction over the native inhabitants. This zamindar was the Collector of Calcutta, whose principal job was the collection of ground rent and town duties. And this has already been noted in earlier chapters. John Eyre was the first collector-zamindar (July 1720 to May 1721). Sterndale names one Freke (probably Feuke).<sup>6</sup> But he was probably Samuel Feake who was President/Governor from 12 January, 1718 to 17 January 1723. So it was not possible for him to become the so-called zamindar. The English zamindar had a native deputy known as the black deputy or "black zamindar", named Govindram Mittre who held office from 1720 to 1756 as already noted. He organised the police force and brought in cosmos out of chaos. To bring in order three posts of naib-dewans were created—(i) one to maintain roads and ponds as well as cleanliness and sanitation in the township; (ii) the second to look after the collection of ground rents and the supply of food; while (iii) the third was in charge of the police including the river police and the excise department. For the original township 2 *darogas* were appointed for the suburbs adjacent to the township. The town and the suburbs were divided into *thanas* under *thanadars*, having *paiks* (armed attendants or constables), *naiks* (corporals or head constables) and *naibs* (deputies or investigating officers i.e., Sub-Inspectors or Assistant Sub-Inspectors). Besides, there were *burkundazes*, *payadas*, *peons* and *harkaras* under the zamindar. The first is derived from Arabic—Persian word, *barkandaz*, meaning 'lightning-darter'—they formed the strong arm of rural government. So the word meant "an armed policeman".<sup>7</sup> The second were used as labour force, the third for miscellaneous work and the fourth in distributing letters and despatches. A riverine police force was maintained to protect the riverine trade. To this end a few lockgates were constructed to regulate the entry and exit of boats. And in 1760 a removable bund of iron chairs was added to it near the Botanical Gardens.

By 1752 Holwell became the zamindar and his police force comprised 143 *paiks* under a head *paik*. Of them 64 were

6. Sterndale, *op. cit.* 11.

7. Hobson—Jobson, 130.

stationed as night guards at the houses of some inhabitants. Their salary was Rs. 2 per month.<sup>8</sup> This expenditure was considered too heavy and private guards had to be paid by the inhabitants concerned. And only the head paik was retained by the company as "security for any night guard he (zamindar) might send to the inhabitants, who applied for it". This arrangement continued till 1778, though the Governor and the Councillors had meanwhile been constituted into a Court of Oyer and Terminer, holding sessions of the Peace and Jail Delivery.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime a royal charter had been granted to the Company in 1726 for municipal administration. And a Mayor and 9 Aldermen were entrusted with duties therefor. This charter was later on confirmed by the Charter of 1753. 4 Courts were set up—Mayor's court of a Mayor and 9 Aldermen; court of Appeal constituted of the President and his council; court of Requests of 24-Commissioners for trial of Civil Suits of petty nature, "the subject-matter of which did not exceed 6 pagodas"; and Court of Record or Oyer and Terminer constituted by the Governor and his Council, sitting as justices of the quarter session. Besides, there were 3 other courts—Court of Cutcherry; Fouzdari Cutcherry; and Zamindar's Cutcherry. The Mayor's Court was held in a rented house known as the "ambassador's house", situated at the crossing of Lalbazar Street and Bentinck Street or the south-east corner of the present police office. On June 2, 1729 the Company resolved "to hold the Mayor's Court as well as a Court of Oyer and Terminer and to make a goal".<sup>10</sup>

After the demolition of the School House in 1792 the police establishment was shifted to the house of John Palmer, "the prince of merchants", who died a pauper in 1835 because of his extravagant generosity. The building was his residence, bank, counting-house and wine-cellar—the most imposing edifice in the 18th century. Government purchased the house for Calcutta Police for sicca Rs. 2 lakhs after Palmer's death. In 1914 it

8. Holwell—*India Tracts* (3rd edn. 1774), 188.

9. McFarlan, D.—*View of the past and present state of the Calcutta Police with special reference to expense* (20th June, 1839), 2.

10. Wilson—*Fort William*, 128.

was demolished to make room for the building which now accommodates the Control Room, the Computer Section and the wireless Department. Earlier the zamindar's cutcherry was located to the east of Norton's building at Lalbazar and it housed the entire police establishment. Hyde mentioned the police office at the 'cross road' in Lalbazar Street, where the cutcherry had been and the police headquarters still were "before the line of the Bailey branched off at Radha's bazar". The building is decipherable in Upjohn's map. Later the police court was transferred to the premises of the Harmonic Tavern, which was reopened in 1784 and then abandoned for ever.<sup>11</sup>

#### *D. Operation : Lalbazar (or policing the town)*

During the annual *Holi* festival of Shyam Roy and his spouse Radha, a vast quantity of red powder (*Kumkum*) used to be sold and scattered in and around the zamindar's cutcherry tank in the temporary bazar erected for the purpose. This occasioned such names as *Lal*light, *Lalbazar* and *Radhabazar*.<sup>12</sup> However, there is another version. In 1770 Kiernander built the old church (Bath Tephilla or House of Prayer). It is said that the red-brick exterior of the church gained the name of *Lal Girja* or Red Church from the natives. The Dalhousie square tank took its native name *Lal Diggee* (the red tank) from a red-brick bastion of the old Fort which, reflected in its waters, gave them a ruddy appearance. The name *Lal Diggee* might have been acquired later from the *Lal Girja* in the same way as that of the upper part of Bow Bazar, *Lal Bazar*,<sup>13</sup> was. This *Lalbazar* became famous as the Headquarters of Calcutta Police just as Scotland yard is for that of London Metropolitan Police. Lal Bazar then stretched from the north-east corner of Dalhousie Square to "Boytaconnah" and was said to be the best street in Calcutta. It was called in early days the "Avenue to the eastward" and in Thomas Lyon's pattah of October, 1776 "the great road leading from Holwell's monument by the south front of the Court House to the Salt Water Lake and known by the name of Great Bungalo

11. Chattopadhyaya, T.—The story of Lalbazar (1982), Chap. 2.

12. Roy, A. K.—Calcutta (1982), 22.

13. Blechynden, K.—Calcutta past and present (1978), 70.



Road". The modern police office was the residence of John Palmer, whose father was Secretary to Warren Hastings.<sup>14</sup>

The fall of Calcutta in 1756, its recapture and the Battle of Plassey had their impact on the development of the township. The Englishmen had to consolidate their position first. Govindpur was selected as the site of the new fort, which was started in 1758 and completed in 1773. An esplanade came up in front of it in place of the then existing weavers' colony. The policing of the township had to improve with the collection and collation of intelligence in addition to the maintenance of watch on criminals. During the siege of Calcutta the town guards stood well by their leader ; but the over-all performance of the police force was not satisfactory. However, the policing system improved with Warren Hastings becoming the Governor (13 April, 1772—October 20, 1774) and thereafter the first Governor-General (20 October, 1774—February 1, 1785). He was a pragmatist but imaginative also. His distrust of the integrity of policemen pervaded the administration.<sup>15</sup> In 1765 Clive came to Bengal as Governor and described the situation thus : "Such a scene of anarchy, confusion, bribery and corruption, and extortion was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal ; nor such and so many fortunes acquired in so unjust and rapacious manner".<sup>16</sup> The Company in a general letter to Bengal, dated 28 August, 1771 decided "to stand forth as Diwan, and by the agency of the Company's servants, to take upon (themselves) the entire care and management of revenues". The Director exhorted Warren Hastings to "adopt such regulations and pursue such measures as shall at once ensure every possible advantage". Thus the full responsibility to create an administrative set-up devolved on him. He started the first adalat system in 1772, which in course of time was modified, improved and refined. Bengal served as a laboratory wherein experiments were made in the adalat system and after workable results were obtained, they were transmitted to the Provinces of Bombay and Madras.

14. Cotton, *op. cit.*, 275.

15. *Proceedings of G. G. in council* dt. 19 April, 1774 ; W. R. Gourlay—*A contribution towards a history of the Police in Bengal* (1916), 22.

16. Malcolm—*The life of Robert Clive*, II, 322.

In Calcutta the main problem of the police organisation was the shortage of manpower. The Calcutta police did not grow in strength since 1756 and the new government wanted that it should. The Governor-General in Council passed in 1778 a law providing for the appointment of a Superintendent and not fewer than 700 paiks under the supervision of 31 thanadars and 34 naibs. The Superintendent was to have jurisdiction in petty larcenies.<sup>17</sup> However, there was no provision for payment of the force. Maybe, this force was to be maintained by levying a tax under the statute of 1714 which enabled the Justices of the Peace in England to levy taxes at their general or quarter sessions. But this statute was repealed in England. This law was dissolved by the King in 1780, but this was not registered till 1783. Meanwhile, in 1780 the commissioners were appointed for the town. They were commissioners of conservancy, though called commissioners of police. They were to look after the watch and ward of the town and empowered to levy two annas per shop and one anna per house. The fund thus raised was meant for the cleanliness and improvement of the town. But this did not pose a problem for the maintenance of the police force.

On June 9, 1785 a notice was issued in the Calcutta Gazette by the Commissioner in charge of policing the town with the approval of the Governor-General in council to the effect that the town would be divided into 31 divisions, each under a thanadar. The list of divisions is shown in App. O. For the 'English' town 4 constables were stationed at each, leaving the number of their respective thanas. Two constables were allotted to each thana in 'black' town. In case of any grievance the inhabitants were exhorted to apply to the officers of the concerned thana and if they showed inability or neglect, they were to move the Superintendent of Police. The inhabitants were also urged to obey the regulations in regard to the laying of rubbish or dirt in the streets.<sup>18</sup> This division of the town with minor modifications continued till 1845 when the Patton Committee wrought drastic changes and divided the town into three divisions with 6 thanas in each division.

17. McFarlan, op. cit. 2.

18. Setton-Car—Selections from the Calcutta Gazette vol. I, 115-6, 206.

In the towns a better method of surveillance had been adopted in the meantime. In 1793 a special tax had been imposed on shopkeepers, residing in the cities, bazars and *ganjas* and on merchants and traders. This tax was abolished in 1797, when the system of court fees for institution of suits was introduced. By Reg. III of 1814 the old type *Kotwals* of the Moghul system was replaced by *Darogas* in charge of their respective stations. Reg. XXXI of 1816 established a sort of local self-government in respect of Town Chowkidars. A panchayet of 5 respectable inhabitants was also set up for assessment of levies on them. A fairly comprehensive code came—Reg. XX of 1817—that was the general plan of the Company's administration. In 1800 Lord Wellesley had appointed a committee to consider the policing of Calcutta and the result was Reg. VII of 1806. This Regulation provided for the constitution of Justices of the Peace as Magistrates, within a radius of 20 miles from Calcutta. Justices were empowered to arrest persons suspected of committing offences in the city. They in those days dispensed justice, administered the municipal department, the police department, the excise department and the house of correction. Magistracy was sub-divided into four departments—the report; felony; misdemeanour; the conservancy department. The Chief Magistrate was in control over the town and suburbs. The report department was in the charge of the 2 justices and comprised 3, viz, the thanadari police, the river police, and the town guard. The report department was to receive daily reports from the thanas. The felony department was in the charge of two justices of the thanas. The felony department was in the charge of two justices of the peace—it was to receive, investigate and determine all information of felony received from the report department. The justices could award punishment upto 6 months' imprisonment and fine upto Rs. 100. Serious cases they could commit for trial to the Supreme Court. Two justices presided over the misdemeanour department that dealt with cases of servants' breach of contract, of petty assaults and the like. The town guard was composed of sepoys, but burkundazes were subsequently added. The force was under a town major and four sergeants residing in the vicinity of the police office. The town guards recruited from the artillery formed an armed reserve and dealt efficiently with riotous sailors and deserters.

There were at the time 12 European sailors attached to the police office as constables. Besides, 6 European constables were there to help the *thanas*. The city was then divided into 40 *thanas*, each under a thanadar with a naib to act for him in his absence and 20 to 30 chowkidars. In addition to this there was a patrol force, divided into 3 parties, attached to each *thana* and consisting of 2 naibs and 12 chowkidars. There were 22 *Sidwali* thanas or watch stations forming a chain of posts around the town. At each *sidwali* thana, there was a jamadar or a naib and 8-16 burkundazas, all up-country and armed men.—There was also an emergency reserve of the Chief Magistrate, called the 'guard of upergusti' or grand rounds comprising one jamadar, 9 naibs and 73 guards or paiks posted at his residence. The river police consisted of 9 sizcars, 18 peons and 92 boatmen with a *bholio* or covered boat for the magistrates and 9 chowki boats to patrol the river. There were 3 prisons or lock-up houses—the house of correction, the town guard prison; and a female prison. The condition of the prison houses was satisfactory. The police hospital turned into a veritable halting station for diseased patients. *Lastly*, the Conservancy department in the charge of the Chief Magistrate looked after the repair of roads, the lighting of streets, the watering of roads, fire-fighting, abatement of nuisance and prevention of encroachments on streets and markets. And the Law and Order situation was on the whole satisfactory.

The G. G. commented on the Report of the Committee in a resolution dated 30 November, 1830. And the new arrangement was announced in the Gazette dated 26 March, 1831 (Police office, Saturday). In the first place, the Town Sergeants, constables, thanadars, Burkundazas and chowkidars were placed under the Superintendent who was to act under the general control of the Chief Magistrate. *Secondly*, four magistrates would have special authority in the 4 divisions—Upper North division; Lower North Division; Upper South Division; Lower South Division. *Thirdly*, the police office hours would be from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. *Fourthly*, the Magistrates of the Divisions would ordinarily sit from 2 or 3 O'Clock each day according to the season for hearing and disposing of cases. *Fifthly*, the lock-up houses and jails would be under the Chief Magistrate. An army officer, Captain Steel was appointed a Justice of the Peace to look after the Police force—he was to act under the Chief Magistrate. This system

continued till 1856, when the police and the conservancy departments were separated and the post of Commissioner of Police for the municipal towns of Calcutta and the suburbs was created.

Patton succeeded McFarlan as Chief Magistrate and in his memorandum<sup>19</sup> dated 10 August, 1842 proposed to divide the town into 3 divisions—upper, middle, lower. Each of the divisions was to be subdivided into wards designated by a letter of the alphabet. To each should be allotted a company of one Superintendent, 12 Inspectors (Darogas), 12 Sergeants (Jamadars), 12 corporals (naibs) and 300 constables (Burkundazas). A Superintendent should be the head officer of the police in the division on a monthly salary of Rs. 120. This memorandum had one immediate effects, namely, the appointment of a Deputy Superintendent of Police. In 1845 Lord Dalhousie appointed a committee headed by Patton to enquire into the then state of Calcutta Police in all its branches. There were then 33 thanas, 4 having been abolished in 1840. By the time the report of the committee became ready Hardinge had become the Governor of Bengal. So, he in a letter dated 21 July, 1845 forwarded the Patton Committee Report with his own recommendations to the Govt. of India. He approved the introduction of the London system of policing in Calcutta and increase of pay for the police force. Act X of 1852 abolished the second or middle division. 18 police stations were retained and they formed 18 wards of the town. On April 16, 1850 the Dy. Governor of Bengal re-iterated that the Chief Magistrate should be the head of the executive police. A. M. Mills was then the Chief Magistrate. And he at once issued an order (C.O. no. 1 dated 19 April, 1850) that the Superintendent should be regarded as second in command in his office. Besides this, there were other instructions as well. Thus the offices of the Chief Magistrate and of the Superintendent were united from June 1, 1850. The Superintendent of police was made responsible for the proper functioning of the Chief Magistrate's office (C. O. no. 19 dated May 22, 1850). Dy. Superintendents were placed in charge of divisions. And there were 3 classes of Inspectors—first, second and third—apart from darogas, sergeants, corporals and constables. Besides, the following branches

19. Patton, J. H.—Report on the State of Police of the Town of Calcutta during the year 1842.

of the executive police existed—the Reserve Force, the River Police, and the Fire engine department. Mills got printed on 21 September, 1850 “the general Regulations, Instruction and orders on the conduct of the police” and circulated them amongst officers. Later these instructions were translated into Hindi and distributed (C. O. no. 23 dated 7 March, 1851). Wanchope became the first Commissioner of Police, Calcutta in November, 1856. His last order in the circular order book as the Chief Magistrate was passed on 30 October, 1856 and his first order as the Commissioner of Police is dated November 3, 1856. Act XII of 1856 placed the Calcutta Police on an entirely separate platform. The first Indian Inspector in Calcutta Police was Shaik Molaim, who was made the officer-in-charge of Jorabagan section in May, 1850 (C. O. No. 27 dated May 6, 1850<sup>20</sup>).

#### *E. Fighting Fires and Police Build-up*

##### *(1) Fire-fighters*

In the early days of Calcutta settlement the scattered hutments were all built with mud and thatch. The only brickbuilt construction was the zamindar's cutcherry at the north-eastern corner of the Great Tank. Besides, there was the utter disregard of the inhabitants for safety against fire. At about 11 in the night Charnock's house was burnt on 19 December, 1664. A big fire took place on 29 March, 1665.<sup>21</sup> The year 1780 was remarkable, for numerous fires took place in and around Calcutta. In one such fire 15,000 straw hovels were consumed and 190 people burnt to death.<sup>22</sup> The settlers thought of the security of their warehouses and the colony. So an Act was passed in 1790, and this prohibited construction of huts with inflammable materials. However, this was repealed the next year for some unknown reasons. The city fathers had placed the fire-fighting establishment under the police. The fire-engine establishment found mention in an order of the Chief Magistrate (C. O. no. 21 dated 25 May, 1850). The order contained instructions as to the disposition of 5 fire engines : I.

20. Chattopadhyay, op. cit., chap. 3.

21. Chuttanuttee Diary/Consultations. Dec. 19, 1694 : C. R. Wilson—Old Fort William in Bengal, vol. I (1906), 15-19.

22. Goode, S. W.—Municipal Calcutta, its institutions in their origin and growth (1916). 280.

One engine at the police office from June 16 to October 15 on cold season ; 3 from October 16 to February 15 or cold season at the police office, the Symlia Sation and at Entally ; 11.5 engines from February 16 to June 15, hot or dry season —3 as above described and 2 at the police office and the customs office.

There had been a Police Commission set up in 1822 to enquire into the fire-fighting establishment of the Company. Earlier in 1803-4 Lord Wellesley appointed a committee to probe the causes of recrudescence of fire in the city. The Committee diagnosed the malady and suggested remedy in their report dated July 4, 1804. And the matter was taken up by the Fever Hospital and Municipal Engineering Committee in 1837 at the request of the Govt. No less than 7,174 huts were destroyed along with other valuable properties by fires in the first 4 months and this gave a momeetum to the efforts of the authorities. At the time the Company had 34 memorials—*Khalasies* and *bhistis*—and 2 European Constables. The staff lost Rs. 740 a month during the dry season and Rs. 203 a month in the rains. The Patton Report (1842) records a big fire in old China bazar on 30 September, 1841. In all 27 persons died in the accident. It was found that there had been 48,049 huts in Calcutta, of which about two-thirds had straw roofs and mat walls. This resulted in the passing of Act XII of 1837, which made it compulsory for the owners to cover every house or outhouse, erected after November 1, 1837 with a roof of incombustible material. In 1852 a big fire took place—this was followed by other fires in 1855 in Dharmatala and Burrabazar areas. G. K. Cockburn, the then Chief Magistrate ordered in January 1856 that the local police inspector was to enquire into and report on the causes of fire to him. All these led to the passing of Act XIV of 1856 and municipal commissioners were empowered to prevent the building of houses with inflammable material. Later the jute warehouses were brought within the purview of law by Acts VI of 1863 and 1866.—jute stores or warehouses would have to be registered and checked periodically.

In 1861 the cost of the Fire Engine establishment was transferred to the Municipality and its amounted to Rs. 6200. In 1865 Five fire engines were imported from England. In 1868 the additional constables' fund was transferred from the commissioner of police to the justices of the peace with the result that many extra

posts were abolished. Besides, the justices reduced the establishment cost from Rs. 6,000 to Rs. 250 per month. Five fire stations were built in 1871. There had been recommendations and the Jute ware House Act was passed in 1872 and the Act made the fire services a responsibility of the corporation and the suburban municipalities. The establishment was recognised with 5 fire stations and 7 fire engines—it was to have an initial expenditure of Rs. 13,812 and a recurring one of Rs. 15,134 (C. O. no. 9 dated February 9, 1868). This recognition resulted in graduating the Fire Service Establishment into the Fire Brigade of which A. Perry became the first Superintendent on a monthly salary of Rs. 200 and M. Shaulding the first engineer on a pay of Rs. 150 per month. The Fire Brigade Act IV of 1883 was passed and it was modified by Act I of 1893. Sec. 30 of the Act fortified the powers of the Commissioner of Police as the head of the Brigade. In terms of Rule 2 of the order as notified by no. 3287 M dated September 15, 1843 the Superintendent of the Reserve Force became the Superintendent of the Fire Brigade and all town sergeants and constables of the Revenue Force ex-officio members of the Fire Brigade. The jurisdiction was originally over 38.2 square miles.

The Dharmatalah fire scandal on January 21, 1910 brought to focus the inadequacy of the Calcutta Fire Brigade. A committee was formed to probe this, but it could not come to any conclusion. Sir Frederick Halliday was left with the job of devising ways and means for enhancing the efficiency of the Brigade. A scheme was prepared and accepted by Govt. in August, 1911. 7 Asstt. Engineers, 7 European Firemen, 2 Mechanics, 55 Khalasis, 9 Syces and 1 Clerk were appointed in addition to the existing staff. It added Rs. 38,887 as recurring charges and Rs. 2,250 as non-recurring charges, the total being Rs. 41,137. B. A. West Brook was appointed an Engineer in February, 1912—he was from Turnbridge Wells Borough Fire Brigade. He started a new era. Two new stations were set up at Timtolla and Sukea Street. In 1923 Charles Tegart headed the organisation and introduced many reforms. With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1940 Bengal was declared a red zone and the Calcutta Fire Brigade expanded with an auxiliary fire service. During 1940-44 F. A. Teacher became the Chief Officer—15,000 men were appointed and 5000 fire appliances purchased. After independence, West



Bengal Fire Service Act was passed in 1950 and the two organisations—Calcutta Auxiliary Fire Service and Bengal Fire Service—were amalgamated under one Director. The 1st Indian to become the Director was S. C. Chatterjee.<sup>23</sup>

## (2) *The Police build-up*

Gooroo Charan Tagore of the Tagore family prevented a constable, Behary Lall, a burkundaz of Calcutta Police from taking a man into custody. A case was filed against Tagore, but the judge ruled in his favour. It was held that a constable was not legally empowered to arrest a person unless he was sworn in as such. This prompted the Chief Magistrate, A. M. Mills to issue C. O. No. 59 dated 29 July, 1850 directing the Superintendent of Police to swear in every officer of the town and the river police as a constable. This was a triumph of the "*Hartley House Calcutta*" lawyers—*Hartley House Calcutta* was "a novel of the days of Warren Hastings" (C. 1789) written by an anonymous writer, but edited by John Macfarlane in 1908. The above case shows that these lawyers had begun to take firm grip over the land and law of the country. The administration of the Calcutta Police under Mills and Cockburn between the years 1850 and 1855 ushered in many changes. The efficiency of the force came to be compared with the Scotlandyard at one time.

The Chief Magistrate in C. O. No. 57 dated 26 May, 1851 ordered the police not to frequent "the taverns of Radhabazar during the day, drinking and associating with low classes of people". In C.O. no. 7 dated 27 January 1855 a police inspector was fined Rs. 6 since he barged in a place of amusement without invitation or paying for his ticket. In C.O. no. 9 dated 21 January, 1856 Policemen were prohibited from carrying swords except batons. A police code was devised for the first time and the system of regular town patrol introduced (C.O. no. 9 dated 27 January, 1851). This was the first codified instruction that formed the basis of the subsequent Police Code—the present Police Regulations, Calcutta, were compiled in 1968. Earlier the Calcutta Police followed the Police Regulations of Bengal, 1943. Sergeant John Kennedy was appointed the head of the military non-commissioned staff and put in charge of town patrol. Then came the

Gordon system (after the name of the Inspector-General of Police) in which the affected area was marked on the crime map in a circular form. A point in the circumference was the starting point from which two patrol parties started patrolling clock-wise and then anti-clockwise after converging at a point preferably at the other end of the diameter and exchanging information. The Calcutta police had to face a difficult situation created by the 1857 Mutiny. Wanchope was assisted at the time by his deputy J. B. Roberts, James Hume, his senior Magistrate and Kishori Chand Mitre, his Junior Magistrate. H. T. Green, G. B. Mitchison and George Purney were the Superintendents of the north, the middle and the south divisions respectively. It may be noted that Michael Madhusudan Dutt was then a judicial Clerk on Rs. 125 per month in the junior Magistrate's office. The Police were instructed in C.O. no. 22 dated 6 August, 1857 to make secret enquiries about upcountrymen entering Calcutta. The commissioner of police directed by C.O. no. 86 dated 11 August, 1857 the Superintendent of Prisons and Inspectors to enquire whether any stamp papers plundered from the Allahabad Treasury had come into Calcutta. Besides, an enquiry was directed by C.O. no. 73 dated 20 July, 1857 into the carriage of muskets, swords and other arms through the Calcutta Streets. Detailed arrangements were made on the occasion of the Muharrum processions in the month of August, 1857. The police were asked in all stations "to be in readiness to turn out in a moment's warning" to meet any emergency (C.O. no. 82 dated 30 July, 1857). There was once a panic at the time of Sirajuddaulah's invasion of Calcutta in 1856. This time again panic and terror gripped the city. The fear psychosies persisted so much that on 14 June, 1857 the "panic Sunday", people from all classes of society thronged the streets in panic and sought refuge in the Fort and could be persuaded with difficulty by the town Major to return to their houses.<sup>24</sup> The Mutiny took the police organisation off the rails. Even in Calcutta Lord Canning had to agree to replacement of his native guards with European soldiers.<sup>25</sup> The Govt machinery was located during 1857 and part of 1858.

24. Ghosh, M. N.—Selections from the writings of Girish Chunder Ghosh (1912), 264, 270.

25. Gupta, A.—The Police in British India. 8.

As a result of the Mutiny Calcutta with the rest of British India came under the Crown by a proclamation issued on November 1, 1858—it was read on the northern steps of the Govt. House at 4 P.M. (C.O. no. 89 dated 28 October, 1858). There was general illumination in the night. A large number of people gathered to hear the proclamation. 56 European officers, 28 European marines, 41 Indian darogas, 248 men of subordinate ranks in ceremonial dress enhanced the grandeur of the ceremony. Superintendents appeared in blue frock coats with silver-plated buttons having 'Calcutta Police' inscribed on them. Indian darogas put on blue cotton coats with embroidered small scrolls on each collar and red *pugrees*. Indian 1st class sergeants wore blue cotton *chupkuns*, red *kummarbunds*, 4 silver stripes below the elbow of the right arm and red *pugrees*. There was a huge exodus of native policemen after the Mutiny was over. In 1860 Lord Canning appointed a commission to investigate the working conditions of the police department. A part of the reforms envisaged was carried out in 1861-2 under Act V of 1861. A single system came into vogue, replacing the mixed system of a civil and military police. In October, 1860 the civil police had been substituted for military guards in Calcutta. In 1864 Colonel H. Bruce, the Inspector-General of Police of British India was asked to report on the Calcutta set-up. In 1864 the Commissioner of Police became the Chairman of justices and a Dy. Commissioner was appointed to look after the executive police. Such an amalgamation was disapproved by Bruce. V. H. Schalch thus remained the head of police as well as the Chairman of justices of the 'peace for the Calcutta town by virtue of an order dated August 12, 1854. And this arrangement continued upto April 1889 after which the office of the Chairman of justices became separate again.<sup>26</sup> Schalch remained in office for 3 years before Stuart Hogg took over as Commissioner. Whatever he wrote carried force. In C.O. No. 97 dated 19 November, 1867 he passed strictures on the police. During his time the duties of the Dy. Commissioners were defined. At first Reilly and then I.F. Charles worked as his deputy. His order in June, 1872 stated : "The Dy. Commissioner is the chief Executive Officer of police and will be generally responsible for the discipline of the police, reporting to

the Commissioner anything he may find wrong and any alteration he thinks should be made". The Calcutta New Markets is named after him. He was the first to set up the Detective Department in Calcutta and overhauled the system of watch and ward.

A question arose as to the subordination of the Commissioner of police to the chief of the provincial police forces. It was due to Hogg that the former was able to maintain his independent status, though the proposal was approved by the Secretary of State in 1874. He maintained that "a system which sets aside the commissioner for an officer devoid of local experience would probably lead to grave error and confusion".<sup>27</sup> The controversy was again raised in 1892, but it was opposed by both the Commissioner and the Inspector-General. And a status quo remained. In November, 1901 the issue again came to the fore. A compromise formula was worked out by Sir John Woodburn.<sup>28</sup> The Police Commissioner of 1902-3 favoured the subordination of the commissioner to the Inspector-General and it was approved by the Lt. Governor. However, it did not find favour with the Govt. of India and the Secretary of State, who in his letter no. 58 (Judicial) dated India office, London, the 31st August, 1906 informed the Governor-General of India in council that "the Commissioner of Police should continue to be independent of the Inspector-General, but subject to the obligation to carry out the latter's orders and to assist officers deputed by him. in respect of detection of crime committed in the mofussil and of cases or matters under investigation in the C.I.D." The controversy was thus buried.

F. L. Halliday took over as Commissioner in April, 1905. He had a sense of history and tackled the problems of the Swadeshi movement. He had to face the terrorist organisation like *Anusilan Samity* and men like Aurobindo Ghosh, Bagha Jatin (Jatindra-nath Mukhopadhyaya), M. N. Roy (Narendranath Bhattacharyya) and the like. In January, 1908 *Bandemataram* was proscribed. By C.O. No. 1 dated January 2, 1906 he set up a "Control room" for quick dissemination of information. Purna Chandra Lahiri became the first Indian Dy. Commissioner in 1918 (C.O. no. 1464 dated November, 18, 1918) in the Special

27. Griffith, P.—To guard my people (1970), 111.

28. Gourlay, 145-53.

Branch. Both Detective Department and the Special Branch were under the effective control of Tegart, who in 1923 was the first I.P. Officer to become the Commissioner of Police. In 1926 he was knighted and he left India in 1931. Basanta Chatterjee who died in the hands of terrorists in June, 1916 was an eminent Police officer and a teacher to Tegart. His son, Satyendranath Chatterjee, I.P. became the first Indian Commissioner of Police Calcutta after Independence.<sup>29</sup>

## F. *The Police on the march to progress*

### (1) *The detective department*

The set-up of a detective department is a recent phenomenon, but the idea of employment of detectives is centuries old. The modern form may be traced to the employment of 'Bow Street runners' (1749-1829) meaning in the first half of the 19th century 'a police officer'. Bow Street is a street in London near Covent Garden, in which the principal Metropolitan Police Court is situated. Henry Fielding (1707-54) the novelist was a Magistrate here.<sup>30</sup> Generally, it is used for "an officer attached to the Magistrate's Court at Bow Street, whose duty was the apprehension of criminals".<sup>31</sup> This experiment was first made by W. C. Blacquiere, a city magistrate of Calcutta by the 1790's—he remained in office for about half a century. He provided a model of St. John to John Zoffany in his historical picture. 'The Last Supper' painted in Calcutta in 1787 as is evident from the *Calcutta Gazette* dated April 12, 1787. It was an altar-piece to St. John's Church.<sup>32</sup> Mills thought over the idea of detection of criminals. In C.O. No. 104 dated October 28, 1850 he put the house of correction for juvenile offenders and introduced statistics to help the police. It was ordered by C.O. no. 51 dated July 15, 1856 that at the time of coroner's inquest the Superintendent of Police should send a written notice to the police surgeon simultaneously with the service of summonses for attendance of the members of the jury. Then Wanchope went a step further when

29. Chattopadhyay, 76-78, 85-6, 93-4.

30. Harvey, P.—*The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1975), 106.

31. Hamlyn's *Encyclopaedic dictionary* (1972), 212.

32. Blechynden, *op. cit.*, 120-21.

he in C.O. no. 85 dated July, 15, 1856 ordered that in cases of murders, burglaries or heavy robberies or thefts the Dy. Superintendent should be immediately employed for working out the case. The officers employed in the cases should be relieved of all other duties and they need not appear in the police uniform. Wanchope had constructive thinking as is needed in the detective work. He conformed to the ideals of a true detective, who should be a stickler for rules and a stiff-necked bureaucrat with an aversion for over enthusiasm and excess.<sup>33</sup> His method of work encouraged his men and many of them—Richard Reid, Srinath Pal, Kalinath Bose—became excellent detectives in later years.

On April 1, 1868 at about 2 a.m. a beat constable found the body of a murdered woman on the Amherst Street. The throat was slit open diagonally and the body was in a pool of blood. Public reaction was strong and Lal bazar reeled under pressure. Soon Richard Reid solved the mystery and identified the body as that of Rose Brown. Later the culprit was found out and booked. Reid then became a celebrity and Sir Stuart Hogg issued a circular order no. 149 on 28 November, 1868, by which a Detective Department in Calcutta Police was set up. A. Younan was appointed to head this department. He was assisted by H. Lamb, a first-class Inspector. The subordinates comprised 4 darogas on a monthly pay of Rs. 60 each, 7 head constables on Rs. 25 each, 10 second-grade constables on Rs. 20 each and 10 3rd-grade constables on Rs. 15 each. Bengalis were conspicuous by their absence. C.T. Metcalf's annual administration report reveals that the number of Bengalees had fallen from 330 in 1875 and 311 in 1876 to 274 in 1877. Here one may note the qualities of Hogg. He was not much of a policeman, but he knew how to pick up good policemen. In C.O. no. 89 dated 31 October, 1867 he framed special rules for investigation and for the first time classified murder, culpable homicide, burglary and grievous hurt as "special report cases". Moreover, he set up the Detective Department and by C.O. no. 9 dated 19 January, 1870 put the Superintendent of the department in charge of all prosecutions, apart from the general suppression of the crime work of the city. The department was reorganised in May, 1873. Reid, still an Inspector was put in charge and the Commissioner himself assumed general con-

33. Reid, R—Everyman his own detective (1876).

trol of the branch. Younan was transferred as Superintendent of the Middle Division. C.O. no. 40 dated May 13, 1872 directed that the Detective Officers would ordinarily reside at Head Quarters and should not take up any case except under the special orders of the Commissioner. At present, a detective officer can take up the investigation of a case under three circumstances : (i) when directed by the Commissioner ; (ii) when the case is reported to the department and Dy. Commissioner orders that the case be taken up by the department ; and (iii) when requested by the Dy. Commissioner of a division, the Dy. Commissioner of the department agrees.

A second re-organisation of the department took place in terms of C.O. no. 36 dated March 10, 1879. Under it there were two establishments—one at Lalbazar where Reid resided with a sergeant and a constable ; and the other at 34 Sooterkin Lane (not found now) : Sreenath Pal was in charge of the latter and assisted by Kisto Chunder Banerjee, Inspector. The Staff comprised 3 sub-Inspectors, 6 Sergeants and 9 Constables. After Reid's resignation A. Hogg, Inspector of Colootolla Police Station was appointed to officiate as Superintendent in addition to his duties as Inspector of the Reserve Force. On W. A. Percy's retirement on 12 April, 1883 Hogg became the Superintendent of the Reserve Force and the Fire Brigade. H. S. Johnstone became the Superintendent of the Detective Department. By C.O. no. 175 dated 17 November, 1884 the premises at 34 Sooterkin Lane were vacated and the departmental office shifted to 5, Halliday Street. Later it was shifted to Kenderdines Lane (no trace at present) and thereafter it was finally shifted to Lalbazar. In March 1888 Johnstone went on 8 months' furlough and J. E. Millard, an Inspector of the department, was asked to officiate as the Superintendent. He was also in charge of the Arms Act Department. E. Robertson and C. Marriman worked together in the detective wing of the Calcutta Police. In 1898 Jogendra Chandra Mitter headed the department ; thereafter Kisto Chunder Banerjee succeeded him. The latter was, however, discharged from service after 3 years. The government thought it fit to place the department in the charge of Englishmen. So M. B. Ellis came as Superintendent and continued for 9 years and was succeeded by J. L. Frizone. By this time the department came to be known as the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) And a separate

independent cell was created as the special Branch under S. A. Aldridge in 1908 to collect and collate political intelligence and deal with terrorist activities. But this nomenclature was replaced by the old one in 1910. Till 1917 both the departments—the Detective Deptt./the Special Branch—were guided by Tegart.

The anti-partition agitation gave a fillip to the freedom struggle. To cope with this, certain measures were taken by the Govt. Classes on unarmed combat were started in August 1908 at 2 Kyd Street on every Wednesday and Friday at 7 a.m. and 15 constables closed for the course. The Revolver-shooting was stressed—(C.O. No. 1962 dated July 30, 1908). *Secondly*, a surveillance scheme was prepared in terms of G.O. no. 5151 P dated 23 August, 1911 and a staff of 4 sub-inspectors, 58 head constables and 58 constables sanctioned. In 1917 L. M. Bird became the first Dy. Commissioner of the Detective Department and remained in the post for about a decade. Then came H. C. Hunt in 1929. In 1920 a special cell had been created in the name of the special goonda Deptt under an Asstt. Commissioner. This was the precursor of the present anti-rowdy squad. In 1940 Hirendranath Sarkar took office—he was the first Indian to be appointed to this post and the first to introduce Atcherly's ten-point analysis of the criminal operation. Sir Llewelyn W. Atcherley was the Chief constable of West Riding (Yorkshire) in the U.K. in the beginning of the 20th century. He found that criminals commit crimes on set patterns and it is possible to detect them through analysis of their operations. This analysis related to 10 marked features, namely, (i) classword, (ii) point of entry, (iii) means of entry, (iv) object of attack, (v) time of commission, (vi) style adopted, (vii) tale or statement to win confidence, (viii) pal: or associates (ix) transport used, and (x) trade marks or unusual signs. August Vollmer popularised this method in USA and Scotland Yard adopted it with minor modifications. After Independence the department was re-organised in 1951 as a consequence of the Hazra Committee. The special Goonda Deptt was replaced by an anti-rowdy squad. In January 1964 the squad was repatriated to the Detective Deptt to tackle communal riots. The missing persons squad was also transferred to this deptt from the Enforcement Branch in 1970. A bomb squad was also formed. At present the dept has 5 wings, each under an Asstt. Commissioner of Police. They are—(1) General Section ; (2) Cri-



minal Intelligence Section ; (3) Anti-rowdy squad ; (4) Bomb Squad ; and (5) Computer Cell.<sup>34</sup>

## (2) *Calcutta Mounted Police*

The earliest reference to the Mounted Police dates from 1840. It started with 2 sowars under a dafadar or head officer who used to work as couriers of messages and inform the harbour master in case any ship was sighted. Later the strength rose for use on ceremonial occasions. In 1850 an establishment with 6 sowars, 6 syces and 7 horses was retained and the rest including the dafadar disbanded (C.O. no. 12 dated 8 May, 1850). The godown was also abandoned. The C.O. no. 15 dated 10 May, 1850 shows that the pay of sowars and the syces was Rs. 10 and Rs. 4 and the cost of the establishment amounted to Rs. 161 a month. Horses were the earliest means of travel. Palanquens were used by Indian aristocrats. However, Murshid Kuli Khan the Dewan prohibited such use, though such a privilege was extended to British Kuthials.<sup>35</sup> This was rescinded later on. At the early stage police horsemen were deployed in cases of necessity, e.g., for revenue-collection or for purposes of ceremony. The use of mounted police for regulating traffic and processions and performing maidan patrol came later. Thus on 20 February, 1857 there was an elaborate police arrangement for the reception of the Maharaja of Gwalior, an ally of the British against the Mutineers. And police horsemen were used to fetch the orderlies and people in carriages. The need of the mounted police for surveillance increased when the business yielded place to the sceptre of the Crown. And maidan was the area that attracted the mounted police. A special patrol by horsemen in the maidan was arranged in 1842. And the force consisted of one Jamadar, one dafadar and 12 troopers. Their uniform was dark-green chupkun, edged with scarlet, white pyjamas, boots, scarlet turban, a brace of pistol in holster and a belt of pouch containing 10 rounds of ball ammunition.<sup>36</sup>

In 1905 the number of mounted constables was reduced from 35 to 20 by the order of the Lt. Governor to accommodate 5 European constables in the mounted police. The constables

34. Chattopadhyay, op. cit. Chap. 8.

35. Mallick, P. N.—*Kalikatar Katha*, Adi Kanda (1931), 55.

36. Patton, op. cit.

were paid as follows—3 at Rs. 18 each ; 4 at Rs. 17 each ; 5 at 16 each ; 8 at Rs. 15 each. This included their special pay of Rs. 5 as riders. The pay of the sowars or mounted constable increased by Re. 1 from August 13, 1914. Formerly, the sowars had been all Indians and 5 European sowars were posted to the mounted police in place of their 15 Indian counterparts. They were soon promoted as sergeants, because of the increase of the number of European constables from 47 to 80 in the Calcutta Police (Govt. of India's letter No. 737 Home Deptt. (Police) dated Simla, the 10th August, 1905 to the Govt. of Bengal). The Bengal Govt. sanctioned the conversion of 2 posts of sowars on Rs. 18 each a month to those of Head constables on Rs. 25 each a month, which involved an increased expenditure of Rs. 14 a month (G.O. dated 8 November, 1912). There was a furore in the *Statesman* in 1912 over the harassment experienced by the Calcuttans in the maidan. On January 18, a merchant, F. A. Gubboy complained to Ellis, the detective Superintendent for redress against the Black watch Regiment. The soldiers extorted from him money. In the same year in December Evelyn Welchawber of 41 Ripon Street complained of being waylaid and robbed of her purse in the Esplanade. In the office memorandum dated October 14, 1912 it is found that J. H. Eastwood, Superintendent of the Reserve Force had written : "We could hardly find a patrol regularly from the Mounted Police for Maidan Duty at night, but we might send out as occasional patrol twice a week. Consisting of one sergeant, and two sowars from 10.30 p.m. to 1.30 a.m.". In a memorandum dated 17 March, 1914 Eastwood re-iterated the need for making 2 mounted patrols of one sergeant and one sowar each—"they will work the maidan east and west of the Kidderpore Road, the eastern patrol taking the Maidan south of the Cathedral". J. S. Wilson, Dy. Commissioner Hq. issued standing instruction on 13 August, 1919, asking the Sergeant Major to "patrol the Maidan with one Mounted constable (beat No. 10) from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. daily and report on return in writing, the condition of the Maidan or any unusual occurrence noticed or reported to him". This is what the mounted patrol has to do today. But there is a difference—the night patrol is performed by wireless patrolmen, not by horsemen.

On April, 1, 1924 the mounted police personnel comprised one

inspector, one sergeant-major, one risaldar, 9 sergeants, all Europeans; and one Indian Sub-Inspector or risaldar, 5 head constables and 48 constables. In 1948 after independence a portion of the Governor's mounted guard was merged with the Calcutta Mounted Police. The mounted police that started with one dafadar and two sowars has today one inspector, one sergeant-major, 12 sergeants, one junior commissioned officer, 5 head sowars, 85 sowars and 107 syces. It has retained the old in the ways of life of the syces and the horses in the stables and the barracks.<sup>37</sup>

### (3) *Police training*

In early days the constable recruits were given an indifferent training in Calcutta. Sir Frederick Halliday wrote a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Bengal Govt. on 23 June, 1906 for a training school for the constables and indicated three requirements—(a) a school-house; (b) a staff of teachers; (c) a passing test. In regard to (a) the lower storey of the old Town Hall was suggested with the exception of 2 rooms utilised for the Municipal Magistrates. *Secondly*, the teaching staff could be drawn from the Calcutta Police Force and would consist of a European Sergeant to be placed on special duty for instructing recruits in drill, gymnastics etc. and a Head Constable on Rs. 20 or Rs. 25 to instruct them in their duties and orders as laid down in the Parade Manual. *Thirdly*, the examination would be a passing test and failures would not count in the strength of the force. Halliday was asked by the Under-Secretary to the Bengal Govt. to consult the Chairman of the Corporation, C. G. Allen. When approached the latter summarily rejected the proposal. At the Chief Secretary's request Halliday suggested on 28 September, 1906 that the lunatic asylum at Dalanda constructed in 1847 and discarded in 1906 would suit the purpose. It may be noted that 'Dalanda' was one of the 38 villages the Company was permitted to rent for Rs. 8,121.8 by the Emperor Farrukh Sayer in 1717. The name 'dalandaha' was misspelt by the British as 'Dalanda'. The place at the time accommodated the stamp and stationeries deptt. Halliday went on voicing his protest in his annual administration reports. However, the Council in Resolution No. 1852—P dated 29 June, 1910 disapproved of his proposal.

37. Chattopadhyay, chap. 6.

On the 1st August, 1914 Govt. accorded sanction to the establishment of the Police Training School in the Dalanda House. And it started functioning from 1st October, 1914. The staff sanctioned were one Inspector, 2 Sub-Inspectors and 15 Head Constables for drill and gymnastics with 4 Head Constables as reserve. The Dalanda House faced difficulties in the initial years. *First*, it was a far off place from Calcutta. *Second*, it became a centre for interrogation of revolutionaries. *Third*, some revolutionaries—Nalini Ghosh and Probodh Biswas—made good their escape by befooling the sentries in the Dalanda House in 1916.<sup>38</sup> *Finally*, "the Dalanda House was like a halting station in between the detective office and the Presidency Jail. The first 15 days used to be spent at Kyd Street and the Dalanda House."<sup>39</sup> On March 30/31 1918 Akhil Chandra Dutt, a member of the Imperial Legislative Council spoke of the torture meted out to the political prisoners at Dalanda. He stated that about 800 persons had been kept there without trial. He, therefore, called upon the members to "delve deep into the mysteries of Dalanda House and the cloistered seclusion of the cells".<sup>40</sup> By the 20s the political prisoners came to be sent to the office of the special Branch at 13, Lord Sinha Road. The school had thus become free from stigma.<sup>41</sup>

### G. *Municipal Calcutta*

#### (1) *Background*

The territory over which the Company assumed control was about 5077 bighas or 1692 acres in area, comprising roughly the land between the river and the Salt Lakes from Govindpur to Sutanuti. The limits, however, included a much larger area than 5077 bighas. Even in 1752 there were some lands within the Company's bounds", namely, the districts of Simla, Mallonga, Mirzapur and Hogulkuria held by private proprietors and not acquired by the Company. The Company's territory was split up into *four* divisions for purposes of administration. The largest was Dihi Calcutta, the central division, in which old Fort and

38. Guha, N. K.—*Banglay Biplabvad*, 258. 283.

39. Bandyopadhyaya, N.—*Biplaber Sandhane*.

40. Munshi, K. M.—*Struggle for freedom*, 194.

41. Chattopadhyay, op. cit., chap. 7.

the Company's offices were built. It centred round the Great Tank (Dalhousie Square, now Bibadi Bag) and included what is called the "business quarter" of Calcutta. In 1706 only 248 bighas out of 1718 bighas in this division were built over. In the same period about 134 bighas out of a total of 1693 bighas were occupied with dwellings in Sutanuti, the *northern division*. In the *southern division* (Govindpur) corresponding to the modern Fort William and the Maidan, some 57 bighas out of 1178 had been occupied. In Burabazar no less than 400 bighas out of 488 had been built over—the congestion of this area is no modern phenomenon. Thus about 840 out of a total of 5077 bighas granted in 1698 by Prince Azim-us-Shan's *Sanad* had been utilised for building purposes some 8 years later. At the time of Old Fort William with its picturesque crimson walls was the central and dominant feature of the landscape. In front to the east was the Great Tank and on the north-west corner of the site, where Writers' Buildings now stand rose the lofty spire of St. Anne's Church. Here was the nucleus of the English town and round the famous tank clustered the houses of the Company's servants. From the sacred shrine of Kali, Broad Street (now Bentinck Street) "the immemorable pilgrim road" stretched away towards the north of the town, where the Indian population had already begun to gather. An idea of the limits of the town may be had from the Fever Hospital Committee's Report, Appendix D at page 136 thus :

"In 1742 the township of Calcutta was limited and defined by a ditch, began as a protection against the Marhattas commencing about 3 miles to the north of the Fort, where a deep muddy river debouched into the river. It was meant to surround the town and fall again into the river about the same distance below the Fort, but was never completed".

From the treaty of 1757 the Company obtained possession of all lands within the Ditch. The town expanded so as to include suburban areas outside it. Thus Hogulkuria, Simla, Tuntuneah, Arcooly, Mirzapore, Mallanga, Dingabhangra, Colinga, Taltola. Birjee and Ooltadanga became a part of the 'town'. After 1757 the Company "annexed a considerable tract of land taken from the 24-Parganas adjoining to Calcutta in order to extend its bounds". It included 15 dihis or homestead lands comprising

55 mouzas or grams and was called 'Panchannagram'. This division of town and suburbs, treated as two separate municipal towns in 1857 remained extant with modifications until 1888. The boundaries of Calcutta were defined in 1779 by a Judgement of Justice John Hyde of the Supreme Court dated 10 September, 1779 :

"Kidderpore is a village about 2 miles from the Court House, lying close to a small river commonly called by the English Kidderpore Nullah. This river is the boundary southward by the town of Calcutta, of which the river commonly called the Hooghly River, is the boundary north-westward, and the Marhatta Ditch, which exists in many parts and the line where it once was, in other places, are the boundaries north-eastward, eastward, and south-eastward, to the place where that ditch of line where it existed, meets the Kidderpore Nullah, and prove that place, the rivulet is the boundary. This rivulet was a little to the westward of the new Fort, which is considered as within the town of Calcutta, and I consider Fort William to be the English name of the town. Calcutta is the Bengali name of one of many villages, of which the town of Calcutta consists".

## (2) *Extent of the boundary*

These boundaries underwent no change during the next 60 years (1779 + 60 = 1839). This may be seen in sec. 3 of the Act XXIV of 1840 giving the following boundaries :

North — Mahratta Ditch    East—Circular Road : West—the Hughli ;

South — Lower Circular Road to Kidderpore Bridge and Tolly's nullah to the river including Fort and Coolyabazar (Hastings).

Act XVI of 1847 excluded Fort William and Esplanade and Hastings from the town. The southern boundary became Lower Circular Road and southern western boundary Chowringhee Road.

Act V of 1868 included Hastings (originally inhabited by Coolies employed at the Fort) managed by the Commissioner of Police. The town units remained unchanged until 1889.

Act IV of 1876 excluded certain mouzas in Panchannagram

and included several villages from 24-Parganas. The town at the time consisted of 18 wards with an area of 3754 acres. The Municipality of the "suburbs" was defined by a Govt. Notification dated 10 September 1877. It may be noted that earlier by Act XXI of 1847 the "Suburbs" had been so defined as to include all lands within the general limits of Panchannagram.

In 1889 extensive changes were made. The Suburban Municipality was split to form four Municipalities as follows : (1) the North Suburban Municipality of Cossipore—Chitpore ; (2) the East Suburban Municipality of Manicktollah ; (3) the Suburban Municipality of Garden Reach ; (4) the South Suburban Municipality of Tollygunge. The town was divided into 25 wards with an area of 11,954 acres or about 19 sq. miles.

The Calcutta Municipal Act III of 1899 defined the boundary by the beginning of the 20th century thus :

North and East—Circular canal, Pagladanga Road, South Tangra and Topsia Roads, EBS Railway line.

South—EBS Railway line, Russa Road, Tollygunge Circular Road, Shahpur Road, Goragatchia Road upto Nunakmahal ghat.

West—Hughli River.<sup>42</sup>

The Calcutta Municipal Act XXX of 1951 repealed Bengal Act III of 1923 and excluded from Calcutta Fort William and that part of Hastings north of the south edge of Clyde Row and Strand Road to the river bank. At present the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act LIX of 1980 repeals the previous Act of 1951 and includes three Municipalities within Calcutta (i) Government Notification no. 963/C-4/MIA-21/82 dated 21 December, 1983 brings in the Garden Reach Municipality ; (ii) Govt. Notification no. 964/C-4/MIA-21/82 dated 21 December 1983 the Jadavpur Municipality ; and (iii) Govt. Notification no. 965/C-4/MIA-21/82 dated 21 December, 1983 the South Suburban Municipality—all from the District of 24-Parganas adjacent to Calcutta. Schedule I defines the limits given in Appendix P. Schedule II shows that the Corporation has been divided into 141 wards.

### (3) *The evolution of Municipal Govt.*

There is no denying the fact that Municipal autonomy had been and is being thrust upon an indolent and careless public. People lived or more frequently died in earlier days and even in modern times through a lesser extent, under conditions which might shock the blunted senses of the dwellers in an 'unimproved bustee', while the Collector of Calcutta in former days and the Major now with an inadequate staff and scanty funds made and make puny, if heroic efforts to cleanse the Augean stables. With the dawn of the 19th century civic administration became the constant annuity of Govt.

#### (a) *Early administration*

The municipal administration of the town was originally entrusted to one of the Company's civil servants called the zamindar and later the Collector of Calcutta. Under a Royal Charter (23 Geo I) in the year 1726 the Crown by Letters Patent established a Corporation consisting of a Mayor and 9 Aldermen, with a Mayor's court, of which Holwell, the famous zamindar or Collector of Calcutta, afterwards became the President. The Mayor's court having civil, criminal and ecclesiastical jurisdiction over British inhabitants dispensed a kind of rough--and--ready justice according to broad principles of equity. A building was erected in 1729 on the site of St. Andrew's Church with taxes realised from the inhabitants. It was shaken by cyclones of 1737 and subsequent years and demolished by Govt. in 1792. The ditch to the east of the old Fort into which the bodies of the victims of Black Hole had been cast was not filled up until 1766, nor the Mahratta Ditch until 1780. And both had been the dumping-grounds for the filth and garbage of Calcutta. The city, however, had become a little better than undrained swamp, surrounded by malarious jungle and pervaded by a pestilential masma.

The Corporation had done very little to improve the administration of the town. So its charter was surrendered in 1752 and a new Royal charter (26 Geo II) granted. By it the Mayor's court was re-established and an ineffectual attempt made to organise a municipal fund.



(b) *The work of the Justices of the Peace*

In 1794 under Statute (33 Geo III) the Collector was relieved of his municipal duties. The Governor-General took powers to appoint Justices of the Peace for the municipal administration of the town with authority to make regular assessment and to levy taxes. This statute is a landmark in the development of the municipal Govt. At the time the Justices of the Peace were the following persons, namely, the Governor-General, other members of the Supreme Council, Chief Justice, other Justices of the Supreme Court at Fort William.

The Administration was divided into three departments, viz, (1) Assessment Department ; (2) Executive Department ; and (3) Judicial Department. It was guided by three-fold objects— (i) to assess the rates ; (ii) to provide for execution of conservancy works, collection of assessment and ordinary watch and ward of the town ; and (iii) to approve assessments and to hear and decide appeals or complaints against assessors and Collectors. The first assessment under the Act (33 Geo III) was made in 1795 by Mackay. The Justices set to their business in right earnest and effected various reforms. One of their first acts in 1799 was the metalling of Circular Road. They also paid considerable attention to the Conservancy of the town for which tenders were invited through the *Calcutta Gazette* dated 17 December, 1801. 85 pairs of strong serviceable bullocks were wanted with the proportional number of drivers for the use of the carts employed under the scavengers for cleaning the streets and drains within the town of Calcutta.<sup>43</sup> The Justices of the Peace had so long collected revenue and administered them for certain purposes specified in the 1794 Act, "principally repairing, watching and clearing the streets". But it was realised later that the town had been suffering from the filthy condition and radical measures were necessary to improve it. To this end several committees were set up. The first committee was nominated by Lord Wellesley, whose famous Minute stood out as a beacon of light in the misty path of municipal reform. In this Minute the improvement of drains, roads, streets and buildings was strongly urged and the need of public markets, slaughter-houses and burial-grounds forcibly

43. *Seton Car—Selections from the Calcutta Gazette*, vol. III, 37, 84.

pointed out. 30 members were selected to form a Town Improvement Committee to push the scheme into execution.

### (c) *The Lottery Committee*

In 1793 the practice of raising money for public improvements by means of lotteries first came into fashion.<sup>44</sup> The Commissioners for the Bengal Lottery for that year offered a large sum raised by lotteries to the committee of the Native Hospital, that declined the offer. This was then given for the relief of insolvent debtors. The first issue of tickets was 10,000 at Rs. 32 each. The whole of it was, after a deduction of 2% for expenses and 10% for benevolent and charitable purposes, given away in prizes. Govt. in 1805 patronised the Lottery Commissioners—5000 tickets were issued at Rs. 1,000 each, 10% of this sum was taken for the Town Hall and 2% for expenses. In 1806 the Lottery was for 7½ lakhs and so on. The proceeds of the lotteries were made over to the Town Improvement Committee so long as it existed. Between 1805 and 1817 many important works were executed from the lottery funds. For example, large tanks were dug, the Town Hall built, the Balliaghata Canal constructed and several roads including Elliot Road made. The available fund from lotteries was not less than 7½ lakhs.

In 1817 the Vice-President in Council appointed the famous 'Lottery Committee', which took over the balance of 17 previous lotteries, amounting to 4½ lakhs of rupees. This committee looked after the affairs of the town for about 20 years i.e., down to 1836 when it ceased to exist. It tried by means of effective measures to make the settlement "sweet and wholesome". Street-watering was introduced for the first time under the auspices of this committee. At this time the yield of the house-tax was about Rs 3 lakhs and of the *Abkari* about Rs. 1½ lakhs. The expenditure on conservancy and police was Rs. 5½ lakhs and Govt. contributed the difference.<sup>45</sup> The total length of roads constructed was about 170 miles and the cost of their annual repairs raised from Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 50,000. The watering of the roads cost about Rs. 25,000. The net profits of the Lottery Committee between

44. Beverley—Report on the census of Calcutta (1876), 46-7.

45. McLeod—Lecture on the Sanitation of Calcutta, past and present, 1884.

1825 and 1836 came up to Rs. 10,19,349 exclusive of all expenses.<sup>46</sup>

The records in the Calcutta Collectorate indicate that the Lottery Committee made over 12 bighas, 15 cottahs, 2 chittacks and 10 sq. ft. of land to the Collector of Calcutta for management. There are still entries as "Lottery Committee" against some of the holdings in the 'D' Register. A total of 12 bighas, 6 cottahs, 15 chittacks and 7 sq. ft. of land situated in different blocks of Heysham's map were based out on *pattahs* as holdings and the owners to pay their usual rents to the collector of Calcutta. It appears that under orders from the Board of Revenue communicated in their letter no. 3905-B dated 16 July, 1867 some lottery committee lands had been sold to private persons as leasehold grants.<sup>47</sup> These parcels of land had no block or holding number when they were first brought under the management of the Collector of Calcutta. However, they were subsequently included in one or the other block and each separate parcel of land allotted a holding number and entered with details in the General Register A with a remark that they were Lottery Committee lands.<sup>48</sup>

The relation between Lottery Committee and Justices are somewhat analogous to those of Improvement Trust and Corporation of Calcutta of the present time. While the lottery fund was applied to excavating new tanks and filling up old ones, construction of ghats, bridges etc. for improvement of health, the conservancy department remained in the charge of Magistrates under the Act of Parliament (1793). The Corporation control of Justices gave way to concentration of authority in Chief Magistrate's hands.

#### (d) *The Fever Hospital Committee and after*

The defects of the prevailing system came to light. *First*, the Chief Magistrate combined the offices of the Chairman of the Corporation, the Commissioner of Police and Chief Presidency Magistrate. *Second*, no Cooperation from the Community was forthcoming. *Third*, the administrative machinery was the result

46. Ray, op. cit., 156-60.

47. Blechynden—Calcutta past and present.

48. Sen, C—A peep into the Calcutta Collectorate (1947), unpublished.

of haphazard and makeshift compromise. *Fourth*, the Superintendent of Roads and Conservancy found no place in the statute of 1793. D.M' Farlan, the Chief Magistrate submitted the first scheme for a representative Municipal Government i.e. Municipal Committee elected by rate-payers in 1833. The Government sanctioned the appointment of a committee for one division of the town as an experimental measure.

However, the Fever Hospital Committee was appointed by Lord Auckland after the Lottery Committee ceased to draw in 1836. It was presided over by Sir John Peter Grant. They produced three reports. The first included the results of inquiries into the drainage, cleansing, ventilation and communications of the city of Calcutta and the means of supplying it with water; the establishment of a hospital or hospitals and dispensaries for treatment of diseases among the native poor; the system of collecting and appropriating the taxes of the town and the state of police. The second report dealt with the Salt-water Lake, while the third with the Medical College Hospital. It may be noted that in earlier years Calcutta with its thatched bungalows and straw hovels was notorious for its huge fires. In March 1780 a fire consumed 15000 straw-houses and burnt 190 people. The earliest enactment prescribing preventive measures against fires was Act XII of 1837—it secured the provision of an outer roof of incombustible materials on houses and outhouse.

The multiple administration of the affairs of the town by the Justices, Committees and the Magistrates produced friction amongst officials and dissatisfaction amongst the rate-payers. This led to M' Farlan's scheme. ACT XXIV of 1840 came—under it the Government could, on an application of two thirds of rate-payers, entrust to them assessment, collection and management of rates of four divisions of the town. The scheme was for lighting, and watering roads and streets—it was far in advance of time. Act XVI of 1847 showed further improvement, for it transferred the conservancy functions from Justices to a Board of 7 Commissioners. It authorised taxes on horses and vehicles. Further, Commissioners were to receive salaries at a rate fixed by Govt. Taxes could be imposed on conservancy: Construction on tanks and aqueducts, opening of streets and squares, lighting and watering of streets, filling up of stagnant pools, removal of obstructions and general embellishment of the town. Act XXII of 1847 em-

powered the Commissioners to purchase and hold real property for improvement of Calcutta. It constituted them into a *Corporate Body*. Act II of 1848 vested in them management and control. It also provided for a Town Clerk (subsequently secretary), a Surveyor and other officers. Act X of 1852 divided the town into Northern and Southern Divisions and reduced the number of Commissioners to four. They were paid a monthly salary of Rs. 250. The taxes on carriages and horses were abolished and the house rate raised to 6½ per cent. The elective principle was suspended by Act XXVIII of 1854. Then came Act XIV of 1856, a complete conservancy Act, followed by two other Acts of the same year—XXV and XXVIII—by which the Commissioners were declared to be “a corporation” with the municipal funds under their control and with powers to improve rates on carriages and for lighting the town. All these Acts were passed by the Supreme Legislative Council.<sup>49</sup>

(e) *Regime of the Justices of the Peace* (1863-76)

The Seton-Karr Commission of 1861 was appointed by Govt. to suggest further improvement measures. They proposed increase of revenue by (i) imposition of water-rate not exceeding 2½ per cent; (ii) doubling of carriage and horse tax; (iii) introduction of registration fee of Rs. 60 year for every cart and hackney. Further, the town should be divided into 6 districts, each with a board of 6 honorary members appointed by Govt. A central board of 6 representatives appointed by Govt. was to exercise control.

In this context the first Municipal Act passed by the Provincial Govt. was Act VI of 1863, by which the three Acts of 1856 were repealed and the management of municipal affairs of the town vested in a Corporation consisting of the Justices of the Peace for the town along with those for Bengal, Behar and Orissa resident in Calcutta. The general control was vested in a large body of councillors, while execution in detail left to a well-paid officer. Sir Stuart Hogg became the Chairman. The elective principle was introduced by Act IV of 1876 by which the foregoing Acts were repealed. The new Act fixed the number of Municipal Commissioners at 72, excepting the Chairman and the Vice-

49. Goode, *op. cit.*, 14-24.

Chairman. Under it two-thirds were to be elected by the rate-payers and the rest nominated by the Local Govt., while the electoral divisions to correspond to thanas.

(f) *The Town Committee and all that*

The Town Committee had no sanction in 1877. Act VI of 1881 invested the Town Committee with legal status. It was to advise the Chairman in discharging his functions. A commission was appointed in 1884—they reported that the cleansing and conservancy of the town was defective and proposed the amalgamation of the suburbs with the town. By 1888 the size of the town increased from 11,954 acres to 20,547 acres by the addition to it of a part of the suburbs under the designation of “added area” and “fringe area”. Act II of 1888 came and provided for (i) the increase of commissioners to 75, of whom 15 to be appointed by Govt., 50 to be elected by rate-payers, and 4 to be elected by the Chamber of Commerce, 4 by the Calcutta Traders Association and 2 by the Port Commissioners. Act II of 1899 reduced 75 to 50—25 to be elected and 25 to be appointed by Govt. It provided for 3 co-ordinate authorities—the Corporation; the General Committee, the Chairman.

The achievements by the end of the century were as follows. There were 330 miles of roads of which 103 miles stone-metalled, 16 miles brick-metalled in place of 82 and 50 miles in 1876. There were 6,811 gas-lamps and 2,295 oil-lamps instead of 986 and 704 in 1863 and 2,720 and 717 in 1876. There were 10,669 carts and 8,796 carriages, of which 5,242 were private, in place of less than half the number of in 1876. There were 84,419 kutchha houses and 41,064 pucca houses for the Corporation to look after in place of 22,860 kutchha and 16,816 pucca houses of 1876. It was not till 1897 that the Indian Electric Company was commissioned to supply electricity to the Calcutta streets. Earlier gas light had been introduced on 6 July, 1857. The watering of the streets started on 19 February 1818, while the supply of filtered water began on 8 July, 1874. The first attempt at supply of filtered water was made in 1863. 7 years later the waterworks at Palta (30 km to the north of Calcutta) were taken over directly by the Corporation. The average consumption was then 4½ million gallons. The Palta Waterworks stands on 480 acres of land. Water is brought from Palta to the

Pumping Station at Tulla, over which there is a reservoir and this became effective from 16 May, 1911. In 1926 many underground reservoirs were constructed. By the end of the 19th century the supply increased to a daily average of 21 million gallons. At present the supply averages 120 million gallons with gigantic tube-wells in addition to the regenerated motor-works. But this is considered inadequate for 9.1 million population.<sup>50</sup>

*(g) Further developments*

*(i) The Corporation office*

By 1848 the office of the Corporation was located at 11, Esplanade Row and 31 Chowringhee Road. In 1860 this was connected to 1, Chowringhee Road. In 1875 the Corporation purchased 6 bighas 16 cottahs and 4 chittacks of land at 5, Surendranath Banerjee Road and built its own office. This was constructed according to the plan of Mackintosh Burn and Company. Earlier the Corporation was in the charge of the Port as well according to Act X of 1866. However, on 17 October 1870 the Commissioners for the Port took over this charge.

*(ii) The Calcutta Improvement*

It was felt in the beginning of the 20th century that Calcutta needed improvement and expansion. To this end the Calcutta Improvement Act V of 1911 was passed and it entrusted to the Board of eleven Trustees to carry out the contemplated improvement. To construct a big road was its first aim. In the first phase it started from the corner of the Esplanade and went up to Bowbazar Street. The road was then called Halliday Street after the name of the first Lt. Governor of Bengal. In the second phase it was brought up to Beadon Street and called Central Avenue. Since 26 May 1926 it has been named Chittaranjan Avenue. Because of obligations raised by the Manmohan Theatre and on behalf of Girish Ghosh's house, the road was brought up to Bhupen Bose Avenue and then directed towards the 5-head crossing at Shyambazar. Another road was built to the east of the town and this is called Raja Dinendra Street. This place was formerly a marshy land of water-hyacinth. On the pattern of north-south road development steps were taken to construct roads

50. Roy, A. K. op. cit. 172-77 ; Ray, N. R. Calcutta, 53.

from west to east, e.g., B. K. Pal Avenue from Aurobindo Sarani to Kali Krishna Tagore Street. Similarly Mission Row Extension and Ganesh Avenue came from Mission Row to Wellington Square. But the greatest achievement was the construction of Rashbehari Avenue by redeeming the marshy land of aquatic grass (hogla). Next was built the longest road of the town called Southern Avenue of 150 ft. wide.

(iii) *The last Calcutta Municipal Act*

By the mid-20th century came the Calcutta Municipal Act XXXIII of 1951. It was the last in the series of Municipal Acts and it contained 615 sections and 23 schedules. The Corporation had 100 wards as specified in schedule V. The number of municipal authorities was three—the corporation; the standing committee, and the Commissioner.

(iv) *The Calcutta Municipal Corporation*

The latest is the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act LIX of 1980. The limits of Calcutta are given in Schedule I, (App. P) while Schedule II specifies 141 wards. The Calcutta Municipal Corporation includes three more Municipalities South Suburban, Garden Reach and Jadavpur with effect from January, 1984. The Municipal authorities number three—the Corporation; the Mayor-in-council; and the Mayor. The Corporation consists of (a) 141 elected councillors; (b) 2 councillors—(i) the chief executive officer of the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority under the C.M.D.A. Act XI of 1972, and (ii) Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Improvement of Calcutta constituted under the Calcutta Improvement Act V of 1911; and (c) 7 Aldermen to be elected by the councillors in (a).

*Secondly*, the Mayor-in-Council consists of the Mayor, the Dy. Mayor and not more than 10 other elected members of the Corporation. The Mayor-in-Council shall be collectively responsible to the Corporation and exercise the executive powers of the Corporation. *Thirdly*, the elected members of the Corporation shall elect at the first meeting of the Corporation after a general election, (1) one member to be a Mayor and (2) one member to be a Chairman. *Finally*, u/s. 39 of the Act the Municipal Commissioner shall be the principal executive officer of the Corporation.



The Mayor-in-Council form of Urban Government has been taken over from the USA, where three forms are in operation, namely, Mayor-in-Council, Commission and Council-Manager. The first is still found in about one half of all municipalities of over 5000 population. The Mayor has two patterns—weak and strong. Under the “weak-Mayor” plan the chief executive is very powerful. This persists in more than half of all Mayor-in-Council cities including Chicago and Los Angeles. In others the Mayor is given more authority. Boston and Cleveland have gone over to a “strong-mayor” type. Compared to two other patterns, the Mayor-council plan has political advantages.<sup>51</sup> Under the 1980 Act Calcutta is also given 15 borough committees.

(v) *Calcutta Metropolitan District*

The Calcutta Metropolitan Planning organisation was started in 1961. The Calcutta Metropolitan District was conceived to be an area of about 450 sq. miles with a population of 65.8 lakhs in 1961, which was expected to increase to 118.2 lakhs by 1986 and over 140 lakhs by 200 A.D.

The Calcutta Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority Act XIII of 1966 set up CMWSA, which in its turn has framed CMWSA (Water Supply) Regulations, 1975. In accordance with these Regulations the water supply is being made in the extended areas of the Calcutta Corporation. A legal form was given to the CMPO by CMDA Act of 1970.

(vi) *The emblem*

Under a warrant issued by Sir Albert William Wood the old emblem came into existence in 1896. It represented two Adjutant Birds holding in their beaks serpents and carrying crown on their shoulders. And the motto of the civic body was given through a latin phrase : *Per Ardua Stablis Esto*.

The Corporation at its meeting on February 22, 1961 replaced the above emblem by the new one. At the top is inscribed in Bengali *Purasri-ardhana* and the bottom *Kalikata Purasamstha*. Besides, at the four corners are Lotus, Wheel, Swastika and Thunder-bolt. On the left and right sides are “ears of corn” and in the middle “Hand with fire”.

51. Young, W. H.—Ogg and Ray's Essentials of American Govt.' (1967), 642-46.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE JUDICATURE IN CALCUTTA

Where there is no judicial Department to interpret and execute the law, to decide controversies, and to enforce rights, the government must either perish by its own imbecility or the other departments of government must usurp powers, for the purpose of commanding obedience to the destruction of liberty.

—Chancellor Kent : "Commentaries". Lecture XIV.

In the initial stages the judicial system at Calcutta was rudimentary and not at all conducive to the impartial administration of justice. It was modelled on the pattern prevailing at the time in other zamindaries in Bengal. The Company's zamindari functions within the settlement of Calcutta were entrusted to an English officer, known as the Collector or the zamindar, who used to be a member of the Governor's council. He discharged judicial functions in all cases : criminal, civil and revenue pertaining to the Indian inhabitants. All these have already been dealt with earlier. But the Calcutta zamindar was like other zamindars. The latter could execute a capital sentence only after confirmation from the Nawab and appeals in civil cases lay to the courts at Murshidabad. But from the very start the English deviated from this practice—they sought confirmation of death sentence from the Governor and Council without any reference to the Nawab and appeals from the Collector's court in all cases went to the Governor and council and not to the Nawab's courts. This shows that from the very beginning the Company's representatives at Calcutta asserted and exercised more powers than were assigned to them. Thus the Company acted as a territorial sovereign vis-a-vis Calcutta and tried to exclude any semblance of the Nawab's authority from the administration of Calcutta. This system continued till 1727 when it was replaced by a new system under the Charter of 1726 in common with other Presidency towns of Madras and Bombay. One has to remember that prior to 1727 the judicial system at Calcutta was based on the

Company's authority as a zamindar, while after 1727 it derived its authority from the royal charter.

The Charter (13 Geo I) issued to the Company by King George I on 24 September, 1726 was a landmark in the evolution of judicial institutions in the Presidency towns. In the *first* place, it established civil and criminal courts, which derived their authority from the King, and not from the Company. The advantage of royal Courts was that their decisions were as authoritative as those of the courts in England, since the source of authority for both the courts was the same, namely, the King regarded as the fountain of justice. *Secondly*, the Charter initiated the system of appeals from the courts in India to the Privy Council in England and thereby established a bridge between the English and the Indian Legal Systems. *Thirdly*, it established a local legislature and the locus of the legislative power was shifted from England to India. *Finally*, it had an important bearing on the question of the date of introduction of the English into the Presidency Towns. However, the Charter continued the prior tradition in respect of two matters. *First*, justice continued to be administered by non-professional judges. *Second*, intimate and integral relationship between the executive and the judiciary was maintained. And the situation changed only after 1773.<sup>1</sup>

The following courts began functioning : (a) the Mayor's court ; (b) the court of appeal ; (c) the court of Quarter Sessions ; and (d) after 1753, the Court of Requests. The administration of justice by them is described below :

#### A : *The Mayor's Court*

This court consisted of a Mayor and 9 Aldermen, 2 of whom could be subjects of any prince or state in amity with Great Britain. Other Aldermen had to be natural-born subjects of the crown. The Charter named the first Mayor and 9 Aldermen thereafter. Every year the Mayor was to be elected from amongst the Aldermen by them and the outgoing Mayor. The Governor and council could remove any Alderman upon reasonable cause.

The quorum of the court was 3—the Mayor or Senior Alderman together with 7 other Aldermen. The court could hear and

1. Jain, M. P.—*Outlines of Indian Legal History* (4th edn), 33-5.

try all civil suits within the town and its subordinate factories. The first appeal from the court lay, within 14 days, to the Governor and council, whence a second appeal could be lodged, within 14 days, with the King-in-council in all matters involving 1,000 pagodas or Rs. 3,000. Thus for the first time a right of appeal to the King-in-council from the decisions of the courts in India was granted. But this court of the King-in-council was not established in India—it exercised its jurisdiction from England. The Mayor's court was a court of record and as such had power to punish persons for contempt. It had also testamentary jurisdiction and could grant probates of will of deceased persons. In the case of a person dying intestate it could grant letters of administration.

#### **B : *The Court of appeal***

It consisted of the Governor and council. The court had original and appellate jurisdiction :

(1) *Original jurisdiction*—*The Court of Quarter Sessions*—The criminal jurisdiction was vested in the Governor and 5 senior members of the council. Each of them individually was to be a Justice of Peace, who could arrest persons accused of committing crimes, punish the guilty of minor crimes and commit the rest to the court of Quarter Sessions for trial. Three Justices of the Peace collectively were to form a court of record and had powers of the court of Oyer and Terminer and goal delivery. They could hold quarter sessions 4 times a year to try and punish each criminal offence except high treason. There was a difference between a court of Oyer and Terminer and that of goal delivery. The former could try all criminal cases, felonies and misdemeanours, whereas the latter only those who had been arrested and lodged in the prison. Both combined meant a plenary criminal jurisdiction. Trials at Quarter Sessions were held with the grand jury and petty jury.

(2) *Appellate jurisdiction*—The appellate Court heard appeals from the decisions of the Mayor's Court. Its decisions were final in cases where the amount involved in the suit was less than 1,000 pagodas or Rs. 3,000.

#### **C : *The Court of Request***

The Court came into existence to meet the needs of poor liti-

gants. It was to consist of 8 to 24 Commissioners. In Calcutta, 12 persons were appointed.<sup>2</sup> The appointments were made by the Government from amongst the servants of the Company. One-half of the members were to retire annually and their places to be filled up by ballot by the remaining Commissioners. The court was to sit once a week. It was authorised to entertain suits of the value of 5 pagodas or Rs. 15. The court proved a success. As observed by Bolts, an Alderman and Secretary of the Court of Cutcherry : "The Court of Request is, in fact, the only Court in Calcutta which, from being under little or no influence, is of real and essential service to the poor inhabitants and this principally because, the members fill up all vacancies in the court by ballot themselves and because the matters in contest, being confined to 40s. must in general be beneath the notice or interference of the Governor or Councillors".<sup>3</sup>

*D : The Judiciary at work (1726-1754)*

The Charter of 1726 came into force in Calcutta in December, 1727. The relationship between the Government and the Mayor's Court was marred by hostility and conflicts. They often came into collusion and "between the two neither law nor justice was treated with much respect". In the first place, the Charter made the corporation and the court largely autonomous, but the Government at times sought to interfere with the functioning of the court. *Secondly* the court's clashes with the Collector of Calcutta have already been noted. *Thirdly*, the working of the Mayor's Court also generated resentment amongst the natives. The government usually sided with them and this became an additional cause of bitterness between the executive and the judiciary. And no alternative judicial system was created for the natives. *Finally*, the courts were staffed by people having no legal knowledge ; the judges lacked the discipline of legal training ; they merely had an abstract idea of independence of the judiciary so that at times they acted in a manner derogatory to courts.

In this context the Directors noticed that the conduct of the Mayor's Court had been "factious and discouragous" with a false idea of "affected" independence. The courts were "too apt to as-

2. Bengal Past and Present, vol. VIII, 25.

3. Bolts, W.—Considerations of India affairs, vol. 1, 80-86.

sume a greater power than does legally belong to or become them". They were found wanting "in a due deference and respect" to the Governor and council, their superiors and lacking also in "concern" for the welfare of the Company's settlements.<sup>4</sup> There were two ways open to resolve the impasse—either to define the vague points by means of law and regulations or to make the executive all the more predominant and weaken the judiciary so as to make it subservient to the executive. The first was intricate and difficult. Hence, the second alternative was adopted. As a result a new Charter was issued in 1753.<sup>5</sup>

#### E : *The Charter of 1753*

The Company had been desirous of restructuring the judicial system in view of the confrontation between the Mayor's Court and the Governor and council. King George II issued a new Charter on the 18th January, 1753 (26 Geo II). Attempts were made to remove the defects experienced in the working of the old charter.

The Charter of 1753 was a modified version of that of 1726 since it continued in substance the former institutions.

*Secondly*, the new Charter created the Court of Requests of which an account has already been given.

*Thirdly*, the hierarchy of courts after the 1752 Charter was as follows :

<i>Civil</i>	<i>Criminal</i>
(i) Privy Council	(i) Court of Quarter Sessions
(ii) Governor and Council	(ii) Justice of the Peace
(iii) Mayor's Court	
(iv) Court of Requests	

*Finally*, the jurisdiction of the Mayor's Court became restricted in respect of the natives on account of the condition that both the parties were to submit to its jurisdiction. The Court thus became a court for the Europeans. Consequently, native creditors had no forum to enforce their claim and the heirs of a deceased person had no means to recover the property when it became necessary. However, at Calcutta the zamindari Court continued to function and this gave relief to the natives.

4. Love—Vestiges of old Madras II, 26.

5. Jain, op- cit. 39-49.

**F : *Defects of the 1753 system***

The judicial system set up under the Charter of 1753 suffered from the following infirmities :

- (a) The provision for appointment of Judges by the Governor and council from amongst the company's servants made the judiciary subservient to the council. Hence, it could not render justice impartially in cases where the Company itself was a party.
- (b) The Company's servants had been carrying on trade privately and this included even the Mayor and Aldermen. Hence, justice was a political farce.<sup>6</sup>
- (c) The criminal judicature also suffered from similar defects. The wrong-doers among the Company's servants were generally favoured. The position of the jury was no better, since they had been company's servants.
- (d) The judges had no adequate knowledge of the law—civil and criminal—which they were expected to administer. As observed by Clive in 1767 : "Calcutta is the place where the profession of law is exercised by men who seem to derive all their knowledge by inheritance or to possess it by intuition without previous of application".<sup>7</sup>
- (e) This was "make-shift justice". In the words of Dodwell, "the judge or the magistrate might be better read in Hoyle's history of the four kings than in Law books sent out by the Company for the guidance of the courts".<sup>8</sup> Long observed : "Their system has much of justices' justice, off-hand and according to dictates of equity more than law".<sup>9</sup>

**G. : *The Introduction and application of the English Criminal Law***

The Court of Directors in the letter dated 17 February 1726/27 to the President and Council at Fort William gave instructions as to how to implement the Charter of 1726. Para 9 of the letter

6. Bolts, op. cit., Vol. I, 87.

7. Long—Selections from Unpublished Records I, XXXI.

8. Dodwell—Nabobs of Madras, 148, 157.

9. Long. op. cit., I, xxxi.

reveals that two written books—"one by the Bridgewater and the other by the Walpole, entitled, 'Instructions for putting in execution the East India Company's Charter'—had been sent.

In respect of the law to be administered by the Courts set up by the Charter of 1726 and 1753 it may be said that "it was the law of England as it stood at the introduction of each of the Charters i.e., 1726 to 1753. It was the law of England as it stood in the year 1726 and from 1753 onward as the same law stood in 1753".<sup>10</sup> Impey, the Chief of the Supreme Court of his impeachment stated that he found instruction sent out by the Court of Directors with the Charter of 1753. According to him, "these instructions directed the new court how to proceed against prisoners not understanding English. In a marginal note they are told in cases where any Act of Parliament makes a crime felony, which was not so at common law, the indictment must conclude 'against the form of the statute'. They are directed to enlarge on His Majesty's princely goodness to extend *his care* and the benefit of his *laws* to his most distant subjects in the British settlements in the East Indies".<sup>11</sup> During Impey's impeachment Boughton Rous was asked whether he knew "anything of any intention to carry the English Criminal Law into execution in the town of Calcutta? He replied: "I have found amongst my papers a copy of a *proclamation* issued by his Majesty's Justices for the town and district of Calcutta at their quarter sessions held on 3 June, 1762 in which such an intention is announced". However, a diligent search for the copy of such a proclamation in the Record Book of the India office was in vain. The House of Commons on 25 February, 1788 called on the Court of Directors to produce a copy of the Proclamation. But this order could not be complied with because of its non-availability. K. M. Firminger tried his hand to trace it among the India office Records or those of the Calcutta High Court, but failed.<sup>12</sup>

However, "an account of the several persons prosecuted in the Court of Quarter Sessions in Calcutta for criminal offences according to the laws of England from the 1st January, 1762 to the

10. Firminger, *op. cit.*, 97.

11. Stephen, J. F.—The story of Nun Coomar and the Impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey, vol. II, 20-21.

12. Firminger, *op. cit.* 98, n. 8, 99.



1st of October, 1774" has been found. The first case is dated 27 August, 1762, i.e. subsequent to the *proclamation* mentioned above by Boughton Rous. Out of 45 cases, in which 62 persons had been implicated, the natives were in the majority and in 21 cases the sentence was capital. Two cases may be taken as illustrative of the law enforced by the courts. In 1765 one Radha Churn Metre, the grandson of Govindram Metre, the "black collector" of Calcutta was condemned to death for committing forgery. As observed by Verelst in 1773, "the amazing extent of public and private credit in Great Britain has induced our legislators to punish forgery with death". The sentence, however, appeared so extravagant to the inhabitants of Calcutta that they expressed astonishment and alarm in petition to the Government dated 29 January, 1766, wherein they complained that "they find themselves subject to the pains and penalties of laws to which they are utter strangers, and are liable through ignorance unwillingly to incur them".<sup>13</sup> As a result Radha Churn Metre received a pardon. The second case set a precedent for Nun Coomar's case.

### H: *The Supreme Court*

A forward step was taken when the Supreme Court of Judicature was set up in Calcutta under the Regulating Act (13 Geo III C. 63) of 1773. Bengal, Behar and Orissa were in chaos and anarchy after the Battle of Plassey. The Company's servants exploited the people, amassed wealth and returned to England. They had only one aim, namely, how to attain easy fortunes and return to England as soon as possible. These persons on return to England led a life completely out of harmony with the prevailing social mores. The vulgar display of wealth with insolent and overbearing conduct earned them the nickname of 'nabob'. In Hamlyn's *Encyclopaedic World Dictionary* (1972) at p. 1046 the word 'Nabob' is defined as "an Englishman who has grown rich in India" and derived from Hindusthani *Nawab*, which is the plural of Arabic *Nayab*. The newly-enriched ex-servants of the Company began to meddle in British politics and used their ill-gotten money to purchase seats in the House of Commons to the chagrin of the landed aristocracy. They purchased the

Company's stock and sought to influence its politics. On the other hand, there was the news of the Bengal Famine (1770). All these led the British public to smell a rat. It came to be realised that the Company was no longer a commercial body, but had assumed the character of a political and territorial power. In the words of Burke : "The East India Company did not seem to be merely a Company for the extension of British Commerce, but in reality a delegation of the whole power and sovereignty of this Kingdom sent into the East".

(ii) *The Regulating Act of 1773*

Two Acts were passed in 1773—one granted a State loan to the Company, limited its dividends and required it to submit its accounts to the Treasury ; the second known as the Regulating Act (13 Geo III C. 63) gave the Company a new constitution. With the passing of this Act, the era of royal charters yielded to that of parliamentary enactments. In the first place, the term of the Directors was increased from one year to four years and one-fourth of their number were to retire every year in rotation remaining at least one year out of office. This would ensure continuity and efficiency. *Secondly*, to prevent the purchase of power by the Company's ex-servants, the voting power was restricted to those shareholders who held stock worth £ 1,000 or more instead of £ 500 as heretofore. *Thirdly*, the Regulating Act tightened control of the British Government over the Company in several ways. Thus the Directors were required to lay before the Treasury all correspondence from India in respect of revenues and before a Secretary of State Civil and military affairs of the Government of India.<sup>14</sup>

The Regulating Act provided that from August 1, 1774 the Company's administration in Bengal should be vested in Governor-General with a salary of £ 25,000 and four councillors with a salary of £ 10,000 each and the Presidencies of Madras and Bombay were subordinated, in vague terms, to the Government at Fort William. The first Governor General and Councillors were named in the Act—Warren Hastings, Lt. General Clavering, Colonel Monson, Barwell and Philip Francis. They were appointed for 5 years, after the expiry of which the Company would

nominate the next occupants of the offices. The Act provided a Supreme Council and a Supreme Court. A Chief Justice with a salary of £ 8000 and 3 puisne judges with a salary of £ 6000 each were provided. The Governor-General, the councillors and the Judges were forbidden to engage in commercial pursuits and the acceptance of presents was forbidden to servants of the crown and the company<sup>15</sup>

(iii) *The Constitution of the Supreme Court*

The Supreme Court under Regulating Act of 1773 was to consist of a Chief Justice and 3 puisne Judges. The Crown was to appoint them and the judges were to hold office during the pleasure of the Crown. To be appointed a Judge one should be a barrister with at least 5 years' standing. Sec. 13 of the Act vested the Supreme Court with Civil, Criminal, Admiralty and Ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In criminal cases it was to exercise the powers of the courts of Oyer and Terminer and Gaol Delivery within the Presidency town of Calcutta and subordinate factories. Under sec. 34 the court was authorised to take the help of the Grand and Petty Jury of British subjects. The jurisdiction was restricted to a few defined categories of persons—(1) the British subjects, His Majesty's subjects residing in Bengal, Behar and Orissa ; (2) the persons employed by, or directly or indirectly in the service of, the Company or any of His Majesty's subjects ; (3) the inhabitants of Bengal, Behar and Orissa assuming voluntarily, under a written contract with a subject of His Majesty, the Court's jurisdiction in matters exceeding five hundred rupees : sec. 16.

The Supreme Court was not to entertain cases against the Governor-General or a councillor for any offence committed except treason or felony : sec. 15. The Governor-General, Councillors and Judges were empowered to function as Justices of the Peace and to hold Quarter Sessions at Fort William : sec. 38. An appeal lay to the King-in-council from the decisions of the Supreme Court : sec. 18. The Supreme Court was to be a Court of Record, having power to punish for contempt of itself. It was empowered to frame rules for regulating its procedure and to do all acts necessary for the proper exercise of power vested in it.

15. Firminger, op. cit. 255.

On 26 March 1774 King George III issued a Charter establishing the Supreme Court of Calcutta at Fort William in exercise of the power conferred under the Regulating Act of 1773. Sir Elijah Impey was appointed the Chief Justice and Sir Robert Chambers, S. C. Le Maistre and John Hyde Judges. Under the Charter, an appeal lay to the King-in-Council in civil cases if the subject matter in dispute exceeded one thousand pagodas. And the limitation to file a petition before the court for permission to appeal was fixed at 6 months. In criminal cases the Supreme Court was given the power to say the final word as to whether an appeal should lie to the King-in-Council or not. The King-in-Council, however, had the power to admit or refuse an appeal from any judgement, decree or order of the Supreme Court upon terms and conditions as he deemed proper to fix. The court was authorised to recognise and admit as many Advocates and Attorneys as it considered necessary. Persons so admitted were alone entitled to appear, act and plead for litigants. For a reasonable cause the Court was competent to strike off any person's name from the rolls.<sup>16</sup> The institution of the Supreme Court was an act of reformation rather than of *innovation*.

(iv) *The Regulating Act as a Pandora's box*

The Regulating Act of 1773 set up in India two independent rival powers, viz., of the Supreme Council and of the Supreme Court. The new Councillors with the exception of Cornwallis residing in India arrived on October 19, 1774. The Judges had landed 2 days before and the new regime was formally inaugurated on October 20. The Council had the power to bring about a deadlock in the executive by overruling the Governor-General. Three councillors—Francis, Clavering and Monson—were men without Indian experience. They came out with a preconceived and unaltering notion that everything in the conduct of affairs here was vicious and deserved condemnation. Francis, identified with the author of the letters of 'Junius', believed himself to be "on the road to the governorship of Bengal, the first situation in the world attainable by a subject". He was a man "not destitute of real patriotism and magnanimity", but malignant in his hatred,

16. Jois, M. R.—*Legal and Constitutional history of India*, Vol. II (1984), 123-4.

preferring to pursue these anonymously. Clavering contested with Hastings for 4 days in 1777 for the Governor-General's chair. The three councillors landed at Chandpal ghat under the salute of 17 guns from the fort. But they were dissatisfied with the reception they met with, although similar honours had not been paid even to Lord Clive and their animosity dates from this. The Councillors began badly by quarrelling with the Governor-General on some petty point of ceremonial in his reception of them and they proceeded to make an acrimonious attack on his policy and method of Government. Barwell was the only councillor who was resident in India. He was at first critical of Hastings, but later became his staunch supporter.<sup>17</sup> Philip Francis thought that he would make a much better Governor-General than Hastings himself. Therefore he became the leader of the majority of the council hostile to Hastings.

It was no ordinary opposition that Hastings had to meet, for Francis was no ordinary man. Facing his chief across the Council table, he criticized with a plausible, subtle and vindictive ingenuity almost everything the latter suggested. There is something almost superhuman in the way he faced his enemies. From 1774 to 1776 he was generally overruled. Monson died in September 1776 and by the use of his casting vote Hastings regained control in the council. In 1777 Clavering also died and in 1780 Hastings disabled Francis in a duel and the latter returned to England later. Hastings wrote : "My antagonists sickened, died and fled". And from this time onward his position was established.

The 4 Judges of the Supreme Court arrived with the prejudiced conviction that the natives had been labouring under the accumulated injustice and grinding tyranny of the Agents of the Company. And this is illustrated by the following anecdote : "When the Judges of the Supreme Court, who had come out with very strong notions of the oppression to which the people were subject, landed at the Chandpal Ghat and saw the natives with their legs bare, one of them said to the other : 'See, brother, the oppression to which the people have been subject. The Supreme Court was

17. Rainey, J.—A historical and topographical sketch of Calcutta (1986), 46-7; Roberts, *op. cit.*, 183-4; Thompson, E/Garrat, G. T.—*Rise and fulfilment of British Rule in India* (1973), 132.

not established before it was needed. I hope, our court will not have been 6 months in existence before these poor wretches will be comfortably provided with shoes and stockings'. Thus the judges, on the very day of their arrival, commenced their crusade against the Executive.<sup>18</sup> The Chief Justice, Sir Elija Impey was a barrister of England. He is reported to have drafted the Royal Charter of 1774 by which the Supreme Court was set up. Chambers was an emeritus Vinerian professor and the only one deeply learned in the science of law. But he was of a timid disposition and subject to personal influences. Hyde was a hard and conscientious worker, but a victim, according to Impey, to some 'disorder' and apt to be partisan. Lemaistre was a protege of the licentious Lord Sandwich and not blessed with a gift of discretion. And discretion is the better part of valour. Hyde and Lemaistre stood for the extreme opinion—the Chief Justice restrained them with difficulty from adopting the position that the Regulating Act had deprived the revenue authorities of all judicial power in their own department.<sup>19</sup>

#### (v) *The functioning of the Supreme Court*

##### (a) *Powers*

The court was to be a court of record and also to be a court of equity and as such was to have full power and authority to administer justice, as far as possible, according to the rules and proceedings of the High Court of Chancery in Great Britain. *Secondly*, as a Criminal Court the Supreme Court was to exercise the powers of a court of Oyer and Terminer and gaol delivery and act in such manner and form as the conditions and circumstances of the place and persons admitted of. And this jurisdiction extended over the town of Calcutta, the factory of Fort William, and factories subordinate thereto. The court could summon the grand jury of His Majesty's subjects resident in Calcutta to present to the court crimes and offences within their knowledge. To try criminal cases, a petty jury of British subjects resident in Calcutta was to be used. Moreover, it was authorised to reprieve or suspend the execution of any capital sentence wherein the judges thought it proper to show mercy until the pleasure of

18. Deb, B. K.—The early history and growth of Calcutta, 147-48.

19. Firminger, *op. cit.* 260.

the crown was known. *Thirdly*, it could exercise an ecclesiastical jurisdiction over British subjects residing in Bengal, Behar and Orissa. As such, it could grant probates of wills of British subjects dying here. *Fourthly*, it was also a court of Admiralty. *Lastly*, it was to supervise and control the court of Requests, Justices of the Peace and the Court of Quarter Sessions held by the Justices of the Peace. To this end, it could issue various prerogative writs of *mandamus*, *certiorari*, *precedendo* or error. Moreover, the Charter provided for appeals to the King-in-Council.<sup>20</sup>

### (b) *Functions*

There is a distinction between 'powers' and 'functions'. An institution is said to have 'powers' when it *may* constitutionally perform what is assigned to it ; and they are 'functions', when it does not constitutionally perform what is assigned to it. Herein came the practical difficulties. In this context the case of Nandakumar or Noon Coomar may be discussed.

1. *The trial of Nandkumar ('Nuncoomar')*—Maharaja Nanda Kumar Roy was the Governor of Hooghly in 1756, Collector of Burdwan and Nadea for some time and in 1765 Chief Minister of the Nabab of Bengal. One Mohun Pershad lodged a complaint against him, alleging that he had made a forged document to the effect that one Bulakidas, a banker had acknowledged a debt to him. It was dated 20 August, 1765. It was further alleged that having taken undue advantage of the confidence reposed in him by Bulakidas during his lifetime and of entrustment of his wife and daughter to his care, Nandkumar appropriated Rs. 25,000 in the guise of remuneration for his service and also forged a document as having been executed by the late Bulakidas with a view to defrauding Bulaki's wife and daughter of their property.

The complaint was lodged on 6 May, 1775. The Magistrate hearing the complaint considered the evidence on record and committed the case for trial. Further, the accused was kept in custody. The Supreme Court took up the case for trial on 8 June, 1775. Nandkumar pleaded not guilty. The trial continued till

20. Jain, *op. cit.* 71-72.

15 June, 1775. The court held Nandkumar guilty and imposed capital punishment on 24 June, 1775. His application for stay of execution and leave to appeal was rejected and he was executed on 5 August, 1775.

## 2. 'Judicial Murder' and other charges

The two sides of the Nandkumar case have been presented exhaustively by Sir James Stephen in an extremely readable book, *The story of Nuncoomar and the impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey* (1885), 2 vols. and by H. Beveridge in an extremely unreadable and rambling book, *The trial of Maharaja Nandkumar* (1886). Both protagonists succeeded in convincing the other of a good deal of minor inaccuracy. Beveridge was biased by his conviction that Hastings was essentially base and he persuaded Impey to a judicial murder. Stephen, though a master of English law, had only a superficial knowledge of Indian conditions and indulged in arguments. His case was strong where it concerned Hastings's direct instigation and it has not been proved. It was weak when he tried to show that the whole affair was by no means the scandalous travesty of decency which a class of historians have held.<sup>21</sup>

The charges levelled against Hastings and Impey are dealt with as follows :

(i) "*Judicial murder*"—Macaulay charged Chief Justice Impey with having committed the *judicial murder* of Nandkumar "in order to gratify the Governor-General".<sup>22</sup> But this charge is not justified. As observed by Roberts : "Modern research regards the suggestion that Hastings and Impey deliberately schemed together to remove Nandkumar by a judicial murder as baseless. There is certainly, as Pitt saw, not a vestige of solid proof for it. There are indeed many reasons against it". And the reasons are the following. *First*, Hastings and Impey by no means always saw eye to eye with each other, as their quarrel in regard to the respective jurisdictions of the Supreme court and the council proved. *Second*, at the trial, Impey was only one of the four judges, and therefore, unless the other three were either in the conspiracy or so hopelessly incompetent that they followed the Chief Justice

21. Thompson/Garrat, op. cit. 135.

22. Macaulay—Essays, 683.



blindly, the insinuation falls to the ground. *Third*, the charge of forgery had originated in a natural way from long-standing litigation months before Nandkumar accused the Governor-General and this was by no means excessively favourable to Hastings. "That charge", as pointed out by Beveridge, "would, in the natural course of law, have been made at the very time when it was made, though Nandkumar had never become a willing tool in the hands of Messrs. Clavering, Monson and Francies."<sup>23</sup> *Fourth*, Stephen claims to show that Impey tried the case fairly and impartially—in his summing-up he gave full weight to anything that could tell in favour of the prisoner. This became a model in Indian courts subsequently in trials by jury. And though the evidence in the *Nandkumar* case was not over-whelming, the verdict cannot be said to have gone against it.<sup>24</sup> As Stephen put it : "Impey has owed 'his moral ruin to a *literary murder*' of which Macaulay thought but little when he committed it".<sup>25</sup> *Fifth*, Macaulay permitted his audacious pen to write "no other judge has dishonoured the English ermine since Jeffaries (Jeffreys) drank himself to death in the Tower",<sup>26</sup> but he went on to say "we cannot agree with those who have blamed Hastings for this transaction". Further, if we were to agree with Macaulay that the offer of the post of Impey was a 'bribe', we should also have to admit with him that "Bengal was saved ; an appeal to force was averted ; and the Chief Justice was rich, quiet and infamous". In this context, Firminger observes : "Turning from the caricatures of the man drawn by Mill and Macaulay to Sir Elijah's own letters, one is impressed by his high sense of duty, his love of the work for the work's sake and indeed the very scruples of the man himself on just the very point where he has been so misrepresented as being utterly unscrupulous—the pay of his new appointment."<sup>27</sup> The "assertions of Mill and Macaulay" as Firminger points out, "now stand exposed as historically worthless". It may be noted that the salary attaching to the office of Judges of the Suddar Diwani Adalat was not fixed until December 22, 1780 and Impey accepted the office with a natural expectation of a remuneration,

23. Beveridge, H—A comprehensive history of India, vol. II, 378.

24. Roberts, op. cit., 187-88.

25. Stephen, op. cit., vol. II, 272.

26. Macaulay, op. cit. 700.

27. Firminger, op. cit. 285.

but no promise of one. He drew the salary as it became due, but offered to refund it, should his Majesty's Ministers disapprove of his retaining it. Stephen has shown that the account of the struggle between the court and the council is "absolutely false from end to end and in almost every particular."<sup>28</sup> And Firminger regretted that the reprints of Macaulay's *Essay on Warren Hastings* went out to the public without one word of warning that "the *Essay* (was) not even what a historical novel often is—poetically true". In this context the Delegates of the Clarendon Press have decided that "regard for history forbids the issue of a reprint of the *Essay* at this time without a word of warning to the unwary reader".<sup>29</sup>

(ii) *Other charges*—It was alleged that the Judges themselves cross-examined somewhat severely the prisoner's witnesses, on the alleged ground that the counsel for the prosecution was incompetent. This smacks of being 'inquisitorial' and not 'accusatorial'. It may be noted that the former is in vogue in the Continental countries, whereas the latter in the UK. It cannot be said that the former is bad. Both the systems are operative in the Continent and the U.K, though their roles are different in so far the civil and criminal proceedings are concerned. As observed by Jackson : "English *Civil* proceedings must be classed as *inquisitorial* and English *criminal* proceedings as *accusatorial*, whereas the Romanesque countries that invented the inquisitorial process use it for their criminal proceedings but retain a rigid accusatorial theory of civil litigation".<sup>30</sup>

Much has been made of Impey's assertion in his summing-up that if Nandkumar's defence was not believed, it must prove fatal to him. Here the Chief Justice spoke in good faith and his sincerity cannot be doubted. Further, it was alleged that if "there was no judicial murder, there was certainly something equivalent to a miscarriage of justice". And the grounds are four—(1) the punishment of death was far too severe and fine or imprisonment, as Sir James Stephen allows, would have been the appropriate penalty ; (2) the Supreme Court had no jurisdiction over the

28. Stephen, *op. cit.* 247.

29. Firminger, *op. cit.*, 285, n. 11.

30. Jackson, R. M.—*The machinery of justice in England* (5th edn. 1967), 19.

natives ; (3) the English law making forgery a capital crime was not operative in India ; and (4) the Supreme Court did not "re-  
 prieve and suspend the execution of (the) capital sentence", though it was "a proper occasion for mercy".<sup>31</sup> Grounds (2) and (3) have already been dealt with. Impey had a different conception of the situation. He thought that a severe example was necessary to check the frequent occurrence of crimes of forgery in Bengal. *Secondly*, in view of Nandkumar's widespread influence and great wealth any remission of his sentence would have suggested to the native mind that the Supreme Court had been corrupted. He said : "I have the dignity, integrity, independence, and utility of that court to maintain". In the words of Stephen : "Had this criminal escaped, no force of argument, no further experience would have prevailed on a single native to believe that the Judges had not weighed gold against justice". Moreover, the council opposition of Francis, Clavering and Monson did not petition for a reprieve. And this was due, as pointed out by Roberts, to the fact "that they had ceased themselves to believe in his (Nandkumar's) charges and were relieved to see him put out of the way". Moreover, Francis the opposition leader described as "wholly unsupported and libellous" the suggestion that there had been conspiracy between the judges and the Governor-General.<sup>32</sup> The Chief Justice maintained at the Bar of the House of Commons that Nandkumar was hanged because 'a native inhabitant of the English town of Calcutta governed by the Englishmen and English law was subject to the English tribunals and justly he made his voluntary choice to live under their protection and it was in his capacity, viz. that of an inhabitant of Calcutta that Nandkumar suffered the penalties of law'. One may conclude with Firminger thus : "To cast the blame on the Judges personally, as was done by the impeachers of the Chief Justice, and by Mill and Macaulay in their writings, is not an honest proceeding. The Judges were but what the framers of the Regulating Act had made them. The Act (and the Charter) imposed upon them the task of dealing with oppression in the executive government".<sup>33</sup>

31. Macaulay, *op. cit.* 80.

32. Roberts, *op. cit.* 190.

33. Firminger, *op. cit.* 276

(c) *Chief Justices of the Supreme Court*—In 1797 the number of puisne judges of the Supreme Court was reduced from three to two by 37 Geo III C. 142. A list of Chief Justices is given below :—

1. Sir Elijah Impey	.. 1774-82
2. Sir Robert Chambers	.. 1782-99
3. Sir John Anstruther, Bart	.. 1799-1805
4. Sir Henry Russel, Bart	.. 1806-13
5. Sir Edward Hyde East	.. 1813-22
6. Sir Robert Henry Blossett	.. 1823
7. Sir Christopher Pullen	.. 1824
8. Sir Charles Grey	.. 1825-32
9. Sir W. O. Russel	.. 1832
10. Sir Edward Ryan	.. 1833-41
11. Sir Lawrence Peel	.. 1842-55
12. Sir James William Colville	.. 1855-58
13. Sir Barnes Peacock	.. 1859-62

1. *Justices of the Peace*—In India. Justices of the Peace were first, introduced in 1670-72 under the Charter of 1668 (20 Car. II) in the Town of Bombay. In 1688, the Mayor and 3 senior Aldermen of Madras were made Justices of the Peace by the Charter of 1687 (2 Jac. II). Thereafter, the Charter of 1726 (13 Geo. I) made the Governor and 5 of the Members of the Council of each Presidency to be Justices of the Peace. Then the Judges of the Supreme Court and Recorder's Court were made Justices of the Peace by their respective Charters.

The office of 'Justices of the Peace' in England dates from 1327. They used to deal with civil and quasi-civil disputes between master and servant and the like and also to try minor offences summarily without the aid of jury. In West Bengal the powers and duties of Justices of the Peace, have been prescribed by sec. 3 of W.B. Act XXX of 1955. They have all the powers of a police officer in making an arrest— they can also make enquiries into an occurrence of offence. The West Bengal Act replaced sec. 22 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898. The latter Act has been replaced now by the Code of Criminal Procedure 1973. A Justice of the Peace in India is looked on as an

inferior Magistrate appointed to keep the peace. However, he has no power to entertain complaints.<sup>34</sup>

2. *Courts of Small Causes*—The courts of Request functioning since 1753 in and for the Presidency towns were abolished in 1850 and in their place came *Courts of Small Causes* with power to try money suits of the value upto Rs. 500 (subsequently increased to Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 2,000). They were established as courts of Record and after 1858 reconstituted by the *Presidency Small Cause Courts Act XV of 1882*.

3. *Courts of Presidency Magistrates*—In 1856 Courts of Police Magistrates were established in the Presidency towns by Act XIII of 1856. They were made Justices of the Peace (sec. 22). They could try summarily petty offences like assault, trespass etc. Besides, the police administration of a Presidency town was vested in an officer, styled the Commissioner of Police appointed under sec. 3 of the Act. He was also a J.P. The Magistracy and the Police of the Presidency towns were modelled upon the system of the City of London as established in 1839 by Stat. 2 & 3 Vict. C. 94.

The Courts of Police Magistrates in the Presidency towns were re-constituted with larger powers under Act XLVIII of 1860 and further by the Calcutta Police Act IV of 1866, amended by a local Act VIII of 1868. These courts were named the Courts of Presidency Magistrates under Act IV of 1877, which was repealed by the Criminal Procedure Code 1882. For the town of Calcutta, *Stipendiary Magistrates* for trying petty offences and *Municipal Magistrates* for trying offences against municipal laws were appointed under Act XLVIII of 1860. By the Bengal Act II of 1866 the police force of the suburbs of Calcutta was placed under the Police Commissioner, Calcutta.

## I. *The Crown take-over*

### (a) *The Sepoy Mutiny*

The end of the Company's rule was foreshadowed in the debates on the renewal of the charter of 1853. And it was accelerated by the 'Sepoy Mutiny' of 1857. A mutiny of troops was not a rare occurrence in the history of the British in India. In

1824 the sepoys at Barrackpore, 15 miles from Calcutta mutinied against the order to go to Burma by sea. They believed that they would lose their caste by going by the sea. The Bengal army was not recruited in Bengal but in the North-West Provinces. Many of the sepoys belonged to 'twice-born' classes who were allowed a deference neither conducive to discipline nor compatible with military efficiency. Bengal was more conservative than Bombay or Madras. In 1844 also the 34th Bengal Regiment refused to march to Sind unless the Indus *batta* was paid. The Bengal Cavalry followed suit. At the end of 1856 the Bengal army was sullen, insubordinate, and on the verge of rebellion. The Commissioner of Meerut wrote to Colvin on 24 September, 1857<sup>35</sup>: "A consciousness of power had grown up in the army which could only be exercised by mutiny, and the cry of the cartridge brought the latest spirit of revolt into action".<sup>36</sup> Until the middle of the 19th century the Brown Bess had been the favourite fire-arm of the sepoy. In 1852 experiments were made at Enfield under the orders of Viscount Hardinge, Master-General of the Ordnance. In 1856 it was introduced in India after its trial with good results in the Crimean War in 1853. With the rifle came some greased cartridges from England and fresh ones were manufactured at Calcutta, Dum Dum and Meerut for the use of troops serving in India. Selected sepoys were sent to three training centres—Dum Dum, Ambala and Alkoti—to learn the use of the improved weapon. The introduction of the new Enfield rifle, which entailed biting a greased cartridge, provided the type of grievance best calculated to bring discontent to a head. A high-caste Brahman learnt from a low-caste laskar at Dum Dum, 5 miles away from Calcutta that the grease contained highly objectionable animal fat of cow or pig. The news spread like wild fire and caused consternation among the sepoys. The Dharma Sabha of Calcutta heard the story and spread the alarm and the English officers were not long in the dark about it.<sup>37</sup>

The alien government was based not on the loyalty of the people, but upon its armed forces. The sepoy had hitherto re-

35. Enclosures to Secret letters from India, 455-6.

36. Thompson/Garrat, *op. cit.*, 444-45.

37. Sen, S. N.—Eighteen fifty-seven (1977), 41.

gained loyal to his salt. But when he thought that his employers aimed at nothing less than his loss of ancestral faith, the very basis of that loyalty was shattered. The revolt had been long brewing, the greased cartridge only hastened it. The atmosphere became heavy with suspicion. Barrackpore, 15 miles away from Calcutta and its suburbs witnessed several cases of incendiarism owing to sepoy discontent. Similar acts occurred at Raniganj, about a 100 miles away. But more serious symptoms were seen on 26 February, 1757 at Berhampore near Murshidabad, the seat of the titular Nawab. Two detachments of the 34th N. I. were sent from Barrackpore to Berhampore where the 19th N. I. were stationed. On the arrival of the former, the latter refused to accept the percussion caps because "there was a doubt how the cartridge was prepared". Colonel Mitchell, the Commander threatened the sepoys with dire consequences. And the troubles broke out. The sepoys broke open the bell of arms and forcibly took possession of their weapons and loaded their muskets. With the dawn the sepoys regained their mental balance. The 19th quieted down. A more serious outbreak took place on 29 March, 1757 at Barrackpore. Mangal' Pandey was a young sepoy of the 34th Infantry. A few weeks back two sepoys of the 2nd N.I. Grenadiers had been convicted of treasonable conspiracy and sentenced to 14 years R.I. Jamadar Saligram Singh had been Courtmartialled and dismissed for denouncing the greased cartridge to his comrades. Mangal Pandey had been influenced by the going-on stories. Matters came to a head on 29 March, 1757 in the afternoon when Adjutant of the 34th N.I., Lt. Baugh hurried to the scene on hearing that a sepoy of his regiment had run amuck and fired at the Sergeant Major. On seeing Baugh the sepoy fired at him—Baugh was unhurt but his horse fell. The sepoy was a match for two—Baugh and the Sergeant-Major. But for the intervention of Shaikh Paltu, a Muslim boy, they would have been killed.<sup>38</sup> Colonel Wheler ordered the guard to seize the mutineer, but none obeyed him. Then Grant, the brigadier of the station interposed his superior authority, but the guard paid no heed to it. Meanwhile the news of the turmoil had reached General Hearsey who rode to the parade ground with his two sons and the guard overawed

38. *Ibid.*, 39-40, 47-50.

followed him. He asked the officers why they had not arrested the mutincer. They answered that the guard had not been obeying their orders. "Not obey orders", said Hearsey, pointing to his revolver, "Listen to me ; the first man who refuses to march when I give the word is a dead man. Quick, march !" Mangal Pandey was arrested along with Iswar Pandey the Jamadar of the recalcitrant guard. Mangal Pandey tried to commit suicide but failed. He turned his musket upon his chest and shot himself. But he was only wounded. Both were court-martialled and executed. Mangal Pandey warned his comrades to take a lesson from his death.<sup>39</sup> He deserves the honour of the first martyr. The 34th N.I. like the 19th were disbanded. But the real mutiny started at Meerut on May 10, 1857 and spread over northern India. Here may be seen what Gokhale said afterwards : "What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow".

(b) *The Queen's Proclamation* (Nov. 1.1858)

The Mutiny sealed the fate of the Company. It was decided that the Government should be transferred directly to the Crown. Before the actual declaration of peace, an Act for the better government of India was passed by Parliament in 1858, which effected this change. It enacted that India would be governed by and in the name of the Sovereign through one of the principal Secretaries of State assisted by a Council of 15 members. At the same time the Governor-General received the new title of Viceroy. This change was more formal than substantial because the actual power was exercised under the Company by the President of the Board of Control, who was a Minister of the Crown. Leaden-hall gave place to Whitehall. Thus ended the Honourable East India, because it was felt to be an anachronism that a private corporation should, even though it were only in name, administer so vast a dominion. As observed by Marshman : "It was created by the Crown 250 years before for the purpose of extending British *commerce* to the East : and it transferred to the Crown on relinquishing its functions an empire more magnificent than that of Rome".<sup>40</sup>

39. Kaye, J. W.—A history of the Sepoy War in India, vol. II (1878). 51-2.

40. Marshman, J. C.—The history of India (1874), vol. III, 457.



Lord Canning held a grand *darbar* at Allahabad and published the Queen's Proclamation (November 1, 1858), announcing that the Sovereign of Great Britain had assumed the government of India. The document was called the Magna Carta of the Indian people. It proclaimed a policy of justice, benevolence and toleration, and confirmed the treaties and engagements made with the Indian princes. Besides, it disclaimed all desire for an extension of territory and promised to throw open all offices to subjects irrespective of colour or creed. Moreover, it granted an amnesty to all those, found not guilty of murder of British subjects.

### J. *The Calcutta High Court and other subordinate courts*

At Calcutta the following courts of Justice existed at the time to administer the law ; (1) the Supreme Court ; (2) the Court of Small Causes ; (3) the Court of Police Magistrate ; and (4) Justices of the Peace. The Sadar Diwani and Nizamat Adalats and different grades of civil and criminal courts in the zillahs were also in existence, but they had nothing to do with the English town of Calcutta. Upto 1833 three different sets of statute law were in force. *Firstly*, there were statute laws as introduced by the Charter of 1726. *Secondly*, all those English Acts subsequent to 1726 Charter, were expressly extended. *Thirdly*, there were the Regulations of the Governor-General-in-Council which commenced with the Revised Code of 1793 containing 51 Regulations and continued down to the year 1834<sup>41</sup> and were applicable to the Presidency of Bengal. In this context, Parliament in 1861 enacted the Indian High Courts Act 1861 (24 & 25 Vict. C. 104), whereby Her Majesty was empowered to abolish the Supreme Court and Sadar Adalats and in their place, constitute a High Court of Judicature for the Presidencies, having supremacy over all the courts in the Presidency town and in the Mofussil. In exercise of the powers conferred by sec. 1 of the 1861 Act, letters patent (Charter) of the Calcutta High Court were issued on 14 May, 1862 and published in the official gazettee on July 1, 1862 and thereby the Calcutta High Court came into existence from 2 July, 1862. As the Charter issued in 1862 was found defective it was revoked and a fresh Charter issued on 28 December, 1865.

41. Ilbert, *op. cit.* 84.

(a) *The Calcutta High Court*(i) *Constitution*

The High Court of Judicature at Fort William would consist of a Chief Justice and as many Judges, not exceeding 15, as Her Majesty may from time to time think fit and appoint. They were to be selected from Barristers of not less than 5 years' standing ; or members of the covenanted Civil Service of not less than 10 years' standing and who had served as zilla Judges or exercised like powers for at least 3 years ; or persons who had held judicial office of Principal Sudder Ameen or Judge of a Small Cause Court for not less than 5 years ; or Pleaders of a Sudder Court or High Court of not less than 10 years' standing. One-third of the Judges including the Chief Justice would be Barristers and one-third members of the covenanted Civil Service.

(ii) *Tenure of office*

The Judges were to hold their offices during Her Majesty's pleasure and a Judge could resign his office to the Governor-General of India in Council or Governor-in-Council of the Presidency in which the High Court was situated. The salary of the puisne Judge was Rs. 4000 per month and that of the Chief Justice Rs. 5000 except that the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court used to get Rs. 6000 per month. Now the Chief Justice gets Rs. 9,000 as monthly salary, while each Judge gets Rs. 8,000. The retirement is at 62.

(iii) *Chief Justices*—The following is the list of Chief Justices :

1. Sir Barnes Peacock	.. 1802-70
2. Sir R. Couch	.. 1870-75
3. Sir R. Garth Q. C.	.. 1875-86
4. Sir W. C. Petheram	.. 1886-96
5. Sir Francis Maclean Q. C.	.. 1896-1909
6. Sir Lawrence H Jenkins	.. 1909-15
7. Sir Lancelot Sanderson K. C.	.. 1915-26
8. Sir George C. Rankin	.. 1926-34
9. Sir Harold Derbyshire	.. 1934-46
10. Sir Arthur Trevor Harries, Bart	.. 1946-52
11. Phanibhusan Chakraborty	.. 1952-58
12. Kulada Charan Dasgupta	.. 1958-59
13. Surajit Chandra Lahiri	.. 1959-61

14.	Himansu Kumar Bose, Bart	..	1961-66
15.	D. N. Sinha	..	1966-70
16.	P. B. Mukherji	..	1970-72
17.	S. P. Mitra	..	1972-79
18.	A. N. Sen	..	1979-81
19.	S. C. Ghose	..	1981-82
20.	S. C. Deb	..	1983 (Retd)
21.	Satish Chandra	..	1983-86
22.	A. K. Sen	..	1986 (Retd)
23.	Chittatosh Mookerjee	..	1986-87
24.	Debi Singh Tewatis	..	1987-88
25.	Probodh Dinkarrao Desai	..	1988-90
26.	B. C. Basak	..	1991 (Jan-March)
27.	N. P. Singh	..	1991-

(iv) *Jurisdiction and powers*

With the establishment of the Calcutta High Court, the Supreme Court and the courts of Sadar Adalats were abolished and the records and documents became those of the High Court. The High Court so set up was to exercise all such Civil, Criminal, Admiralty and Vice-Admiralty, Testamentary, Intestate and Matrimonial Jurisdiction, Original and Appellate and all such powers and authority as Her Majesty might, by Letters Patent grant and direct.

I. *An ordinary original civil jurisdiction*—The Calcutta High Court was constituted into a court of record. It was to have an ordinary original civil jurisdiction within the local limits of Calcutta. This jurisdiction was similar to that of the Supreme Court abolished. The Court could try suits except those of Small Cause Court at Calcutta and in which the subject-matter involved did not exceed Rs. 100. The local limits of Calcutta are defined by the Calcutta High Court (Jurisdiction Limits) Act XV of 1919. In a sense the former Supreme Court had a broader jurisdiction inasmuch as it had jurisdiction over British subjects or in case of 'constructive inhabitancy'. The High Court did not inherit the original civil jurisdiction which the Supreme Court had over certain classes of persons outside the limits of the Presidency Town.<sup>42</sup>

In two respects, however, the High Court's ordinary original civil jurisdiction was liberalised. *First*, the Supreme Court was debarred by the Act of Settlement, 1781 from exercising any jurisdiction in revenue matters. The High Court had no such restriction. *Second*, the clause defining the ordinary original civil jurisdiction was so worded as to enable the High Court to take cognizance of any case and to apply a remedy to every wrong including matrimonial causes of non-Christians on the civil side.<sup>43</sup>

II. *An extra-ordinary original civil jurisdiction*—The High Court was authorised to exercise an extra-ordinary original civil jurisdiction by which it could remove and try any suit pending in any court subject to its superintendence either on agreement of the parties or for the sake of justice. The Court was thus empowered to call for and try, as a court of first instance, any suit which the law required to be instituted before any other tribunal.

### III. *An appellate civil jurisdiction*

The High Court could hear appeals from civil courts subordinate to it. It inherited this jurisdiction from the former Sadar Diwani Adalat. It could hear appeals from a judgement of one of its judges or from the Division Bench whenever they were equally divided in opinion. These are known as letters patent appeals because these are not based on any law, but on the specific clause in the Charter. Appeals from the High Court lay to the Privy Council.

IV. *An ordinary original criminal jurisdiction*—This jurisdiction was the same as that of the Supreme Court.

V. *An extra-ordinary original criminal jurisdiction*—The High Court was authorised to try at its discretion any person brought before it on charges preferred by the Advocate-General, or by any Magistrate, or any other officer empowered by the government in this behalf. This extra-ordinary jurisdiction was something new since the Sadar Nizamat Adalat had no original jurisdiction.

VI. *An appellate criminal jurisdiction*—The High Court was to have an appellate criminal jurisdiction and to hear appeals from subordinate criminal courts. As a court of reference and revi-

43. Jain, *op. cit.*, 103. 270-2, 278-84.

sion it was authorised to hear and determine all such cases as referred to it by the Sessions Judge or by any other authorised officer.

*(v) The law to be applied*

The Charter provided as follows. The High Court in the exercise of its ordinary original civil jurisdiction was to apply the same law or equity as would have been applied by the Supreme Court. In the exercise of its extra-ordinary original civil jurisdiction it was to apply such law or equity and the rule of good conscience as would have been applied by the local court. In the exercise of the appellate jurisdiction it was to apply the same law or equity and the rule of good conscience as the court of the first instance ought to have applied.

In criminal matters the court was to apply the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

*(vi) Procedure*

In civil cases the court was to follow the Civil Procedure Code, 1859, while in criminal matters there was the Code of Criminal Procedure 1861. However, it was to follow, on the ordinary original side; the procedure *followed* by the Supreme Court.

*(vii) Further developments*

The 1861 Act was modified by the Indian High Courts Act, 1911 (1 & 2 Geo. V.C. 18). The ceiling on the number of judges excluding the Chief Justice was raised from 15 to 20. *Secondly*, the Governor-General-in-Council was empowered to appoint additional judges for a period of two years. *Thirdly*, the salaries of the judges or temporary judges could be paid out of the revenues of India. *Lastly*, the power to set up High Courts was liberalised.

On 29 July, 1915 the British Parliament passed the Govt. of India (consolidating) Act, 1915 (5 & 6 Geo. V.C. 61) in order to consolidate and re-enact the existing statutes relating to the Govt. of India, namely, the provisions of the 1861 and 1911 Acts regarding the High Courts. The High Courts of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay might not "exercise any original jurisdiction in any matter concerning revenue", although they could adjudicate on it in appeal. This was a retrograde step. *Secondly*, the

1915 Act re-enacted a few provisions of the Regulating Act, 1773 and the Act of Settlement, 1781.

The Government of India Act, 1935 (26 Geo. V.C. 2) remodelled the Constitution on federal lines. The jurisdiction of the High Courts continued as before. *Secondly*, the numerical ceiling on the judges was dropped. *Thirdly*, the G-G could appoint additional judges as before for 2 years. *Fourthly*, the judges used to hold office upto 60 years and could be removed by His Majesty only on the ground of misbehaviour or infirmity of mind or body, if the Privy Council, on a reference to it by His Majesty, reported his removal.

A High Court under the Constitution of India, 1950 is a court of record. The judges are appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State concerned and the Chief Justice of the High Court to which the appointment relates. The number of Judges is fixed by the President from time to time. A person is eligible to be a judge if he is a citizen of India and must either have held a judicial office in India or been an advocate of a High Court for at least 10 years. A barrister is not entitled *ipso facto* to be appointed a High Court Judge. The judges are to retire at 62 and can be removed when the two Houses of Parliament pass an address on the ground of "proved misbehaviour or incapacity" by a majority of the total membership of each House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting. Parliament has enacted the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 to regulate the procedure for investigation and proof of misbehaviour or incapacity of a Judge for presenting an address by Parliament to the President for his removal. The security of tenure and emoluments are the two essential requisites for an independent judiciary. So the expenses of a High Court are "charged" upon the Consolidated Fund of the concerned State. Moreover, there is a ban on legislative discussion of the conduct of a judge in State legislature. Art. 225 continues in force the jurisdiction and the law prior to the constitution. However, two changes have been introduced. *First*, the old restriction imposed by the 1915 Act in regard to revenue matters has been abolished. *Second*, Art. 226 has conferred on the High Courts the power to issue prerogative writs in the nature of *habeas corpus*, *mandamus*, prohibition, *quo warranto* and *certiorari*.

(b) *Presidency Courts*

I. *Civil Courts*

(1) *City Civil Courts*

For the Presidency town of Calcutta there has always been a separate and distinct system of administration of justice and constitution of courts. The original side of the High Court stepped into the shoes of the Supreme Court in 1862. Measures were taken from time to time to relieve it of heavy work. Thus the City Civil Court for the City of Calcutta was established on February 23, 1957 by the Calcutta City Civil Court Act XXI of 1963. This court is subordinate to, and subject to the superintendence of the Calcutta High Court. It has a Chief Judge and other Judges appointed by the State Government. It has jurisdiction over (1) suits and proceedings of civil nature not exceeding Rs. 10,000 in value, (2) any proceeding under the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890, (3) Part X of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 and Succession Certificates, and (4) suits relating to cheques and promissory notes not exceeding Rs. 10,000 in value. However, suits and proceedings exceeding to Rs. 5,000 in value in respect of bills of exchange, hundies or other negotiable sureties for money as well as letters of credit as mentioned in the First Schedule are excluded from the Court's jurisdiction. An appeal lies to the High Court.

(2) *Presidency Small Cause Court*

The Presidency Small Cause Court is the descendant of the Court of Request, established on the model of the Court of Conscience in England for trying cases of small debt, by the Charter of 1753, with jurisdiction upto 10 pagodas (about Rs. 30). This was replaced under Act of 1850 by the Court of Small Causes with jurisdiction upto Rs. 500, increased later to Rs. 13000 by Act XXVI of 1864. This was finally reconstituted by Act XV of 1882.

This court has jurisdiction to try all suits arising within the limits of the ordinary original civil jurisdiction of the High Court, provided the value of the subject-matter does not exceed Rs. 2,000: Sec. 18. Under sec. 41 it can take cognizance of a suit for recovery of possession, by a summary procedure, of any immovable property upto the value of Rs. 2,000. It is under

an obligation to refer to the High Court for its opinion certain questions of law arising under sec. 69 and its judgement depends on the opinion of the High Court. However, it is debarred by sec. 19 from trying suits relating to revenue, recovery or partition of immovable property, restitution of conjugal rights, specific performance of contracts, dissolution of partnership, injunction and the like.

## II. *Criminal Courts*

### (1) *Presidency Magistrates*

The Code of Criminal Procedure (Act XXV of 1861) was followed, after several amendments, by Act X of 1872. But the latter did not apply to the High Court in the Presidency town and Court of Police Magistrate. Thereafter came the Code of Criminal Procedure (Act XX of 1882) the first Code that applied to the whole of British India except the Police and Commissioner of Police in the Presidency towns. In the words of Stephen : "The system is far more original and more directly the result of Indian experience than the system of criminal law embodied in the Indian Penal Code (which is) almost entirely a new version of the law of England."<sup>44</sup> Sec. 6 of the Code provided that in addition to the High Court, there would be in British India, (1) Courts of Session, (2) Courts of Presidency Magistrates, and (3) Courts of Magistrates of the first, second and third class. Then came the Code—Act V—of 1898, which was almost a reproduction of the 1882 Code. Only a few sections applied to the police in the town of Calcutta, governed still then by the Calcutta Police Act IV of 1866. For the Presidency towns, the code provided that besides Presidency Magistrates, there would also be a Chief Presidency Magistrate, Additional Chief Presidency Magistrate and the Benches of Presidency Magistrates, all subordinate to the Chief Presidency Magistrate.

### (2) *Sessions Court for Calcutta town*

Under section 7(4) of the Code of 1898, the Presidency town of Calcutta formed a separate sessions division or district and

44. Stephen, J. F.—A history of the Criminal Law of England, Vol. III (1883), 345-44.



the High Court had in it the sessions court for Calcutta, though not a court of Sessions Judge.

### (3) *City Sessions Court*

The City Sessions Court was established with effect from 23 February, 1957 under the City Sessions Court Act XX of 1963. It consists of a Chief Judge and as many Judges as the State Government thinks fit. Sec. 5 lays down that the Presidency-town of Calcutta shall be deemed a sessions division and a district and the city Sessions Court a Court of Session. The first schedule to the Act lists 'Scheduled offences' to be triable by the High Court, namely, offences u/s 131-133, 302-3, 307, 396, 468, 477A, criminal conspiracy and abetment or attempt.

### (4) *Metropolitan Magistrates*

The Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 has been replaced by that of 1973 (Act II of 1974). Sec. 16 provides for courts of Metropolitan Magistrates that have replaced the Presidency Magistrates. The latter were so called because Calcutta was the seat of the President of the Council of the E.I. Company. After the abolition of the Presidency, a new nomenclature became urgent. And the 1973 Code introduces a new concept of 'metropolis' defined in sec. 8 as "city or town whose population exceeds one million". In Calcutta there shall be a Chief Metropolitan Magistrate and also an additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate. There shall also be Metropolitan Magistrates and Special Metropolitan Magistrates in addition to the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, all sub-ordinate to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate. Sec. 19 subordinates all these Magistrates to the Sessions Judge.

## K. *Appellate Courts in hierarchy*

### 1. *The Privy Council*

#### (a) *Basis of jurisdiction*

After the Norman conquest of England, the King-in-Council came to be regarded as the court of last resort in case of default, defect or miscarriage of justice in the lower courts. And the jurisdiction of the King-in-Council to entertain appeals from the courts in the King's Dominions is based on the royal prerogative

right, and, described in *Reg. v. Bertrand*<sup>45</sup> as "the inherent prerogative right, and, on all proper occasions, the duty of the Queen-in-Council to exercise an appellate jurisdiction with a view not only to ensure, as far as may be, the due administration of justice in the individual case but also to preserve the due course of procedure generally". The House of Lords is the final court of appeal from the Courts in England. For the British possessions beyond the seas, petitions seeking justice continued to go to the King-in-council which functioned throughout as the court of last resort and as an ultimate court of appeal. The appellate jurisdiction of the King-in-Council from the Courts overseas is thus based on the constitutional principle that the King, as the fountain of justice, has a prerogative right to hear appeals from colonial courts.<sup>46</sup> The sovereign always exercised jurisdiction through a council, *curia regis*, which acted in an advisory capacity to the Crown.<sup>47</sup>

#### (b) *Reorganisation*

With the growth of the British Empire, business coming before the Privy Council increased. It used to do its work by a system of committees. One such committee was for Trade and Foreign Plantations set up in 1667. The hearing of appeals was conducted by a sub-committee of this committee. The sub-committee had no permanent existence—it had no fixed membership. Its quorum was fixed at 3 by an Order-in-council dated December 10, 1696. Usually the hearing took place before 5 or 6 persons having no judicial experience and acquaintance with law. Often a legal Privy Councillor was put on the committee—the Master of the Rolls often sat in the committee at the close of the 18th century. In 1828 Lord Brougham in the course of his speech in the House of Commons on law reform commented on the hearing of appeals by the Privy Council. He pointed out that during the period from 1814 to 1826 the average annual session of the Privy Council covered only 9 days. In 1830 Lord Brougham became the Lord Chancellor and decided to reform the constitution of the Privy Council. Accordingly on August 14, 1833 Parliament enacted the Judicial Committee Act, 1833 (3 & 4 will IV. C. 41). The

45. L.R. 1 P.C. 520 (529).

46. Jain, *op. cit.*, 290.

47. Halsbury's Laws of England, III Ed. (Simonds) Vol. IX, 374.

Act constituted a committee to be known as the 'Judicial Committee of the Privy Council', consisting of the President of the Privy Council, Lord High Chancellor and certain named members. The quorum was fixed at 4. Two members of the Privy Council who had held judicial office in India could be appointed to attend the sittings as assessors without any right to vote. Each was to receive £ 400 annually as compensation.

In July 1843 an Act (6 & 7 Vict. C. 38) was passed, reducing the quorum of 4 to 3. In 1876 the Appellate Jurisdiction Act (39 & 40 Vict. C. 59) provided for the appointment of 'Law Lords' to the Judicial Committee. In 1895 the number of colonial judges was fixed at 5. The Appellate Jurisdiction Act, 1908 (8 Edw. VII. C. 51) laid down that the number of persons from British India becoming Privy Councillors was not to exceed two at a time. In 1913 the number of colonial judges was increased from 5 to 7 by an Act (s. 3 of 3 & 4 Geo. V.C. 21). From 1915 to 1947, the Privy Council sat in two divisions—one for Indian appeals and the other for the colonial and dominion appeals, each having at least 5 judges.<sup>48</sup>

### (c) Appeals

(i) *Under the 1726 Charter*—In 1726 a right to appeal to the King-in-Council was granted for the first time from Courts in India. The first appeal lay to the Governor and Council from the Mayor's Court. Thereafter a further appeal lay to the King-in-Council from the Governor and Council when the subject-matter was worth more than 1,000 pagodas. The limitation of the appeal was 14 days.

(ii) *Under the Regulating Act of 1773*—The Mayor's Court at Calcutta gave place to the Supreme Court in 1774 under the Regulating Act of 1773. Clauses 30 and 33 of the Charter provided that an aggrieved party could file an appeal to the Privy Council within 6 months from the date of judgement in cases where the value of the subject-matter was above 1,000 pagodas. Clause 31 required that the Supreme Court was to forward, in cases of such appeal, the entire record to the Privy Council. Under clause 32, the Supreme Court had in criminal matters, the discretion to allow or disallow the appeal.

48. Jain, *op. cit.*, 299-302.

### (iii) *Appeals from the High Court*

The practice of invoking the exercise of the royal prerogative by way of appeal from any court in His Majesty's Dominions, in its origin, depended on a petitory appeal to the sovereign as the fountain head of justice for protection against injustice. A petition to the King-in-Council was taken into consideration as a matter of grace. It lay in the King-in-Council to grant or refuse leave to appeal. With the settlement of Canada and the creation of the Indian empire the practice in vogue became incorporated in the royal charters or statutes enacted by Parliament or the local legislation of the settlement. The former petitory appeal thus ripened into a privilege for the King's subjects. Appeals made under these provisions came to be designated as "appeals as of right" as contrasted with "appeals by special leave", which arose in the King's prerogative as "fountain of justice".

#### I. *Appeals as of right*

With the creation of the Calcutta High Court in 1861 a major change came over the scheme of judicial institution in India. The charter defined the circumstances in which appeals could be taken to the Privy Council. *First*, an appeal could be made from any final judgement, decree or order of the High Court, if the value of the subject-matter was not less than Rs. 10,000, or the High Court declared that "the case was a fit one for appeal" to the King-in-Council. *Second*, appeals lay also from interlocutory judgements. *Third*, the High Court in its discretion could grant permission to appeal. *Fourth*, in criminal cases appeals could be either from any judgement, or sentence of a High Court made in exercise of its original jurisdiction, or where a point of law had been reserved for the opinion of the High Court by another court of original jurisdiction. *Finally*, in cases involving a subject-matter worth less than Rs. 10,000 appeals could be heard by the Privy Council if the High Court certified that the case was a fit one for appeal.

#### II. *Appeals by special leave*

Usually the royal Charter or legislation laid down the conditions under which appeals 'as of right' were permitted to the Privy Council. However, this did not necessarily exhaust the whole gamut of the Crown's prerogative as the fountain of justice.

The King-in-Council generally reserved to himself the power to grant special leave to appeal in cases which did not qualify for 'appeal as of right'. And this was provided in the charter concerned, for example, clause 33 in the charter of the Calcutta Supreme Court. The approach was different in civil and criminal matters as shown below.

(i) *Civil matters*—The attitude was flexible here. The Privy Council would grant special leave to appeal where (1) there was a substantial question of law involved, (2) the case was of some gravity involving some matter of public interest, or (3) the case was of some public importance or of a substantial character. However, the King-in-Council decided each case on its merits in the light of the guiding principles. As stated by Viscount Haldane in *Hull v. McKenna*:<sup>49</sup> "The practice or the unwritten usage grown up is that the Judicial Committee is to look closely into the nature of the case and if in their Lordship's opinion, the question is one that can best be determined on the spot, then the sovereign is not, as a rule, advised to intervene, nor is he advised to intervene normally. The case (should be) one involving some great principle or of some very wide public interest. But the sovereign looking at the matter exercises discretion".

(ii) *Criminal matters*

The Privy Council's approach here is more restrictive. The Charter of 1726 did not provide for appeals in criminal matters. This meant that there could be no appeal in criminal cases 'as of right'. Besides, the charter of the Supreme Court conferred full authority on the court to allow or disallow appeals in criminal cases. The Act of Settlement, 1781 provided appeals from the Sadar Diwani Adalat, but was silent on the question of appeals from the Sadar Nizamat Adalat. In 1862 the Privy Council considered the question of special leave to appeal to itself from the Sadar Nizamat Adalat at Calcutta in *Reg. v. Joykissen Mookherjee*<sup>50</sup> and declined to intervene on the ground that it would be "entirely destructive of the administration of all criminal jurisprudence". After 1862 the Privy Council somewhat relented. In 1887 the Privy Council advised in *re Diller's case*<sup>51</sup> the sovereign

49. 1986 I.R. 402.

50. 1 Moo P.C. (N.S.) 273 (1862), 51. 12 AC 459.

to intervene only when it was shown that (i) by a disregard of the forms of legal processes, or (ii) by some violation of natural justice, or (iii) otherwise, substantial and grave injustice had been done. Thus it interfered only in cases of miscarriage of justice.

## 2. *The Federal Court*

The Govt. of India Act, 1935 provided for a federal polity for India. To this end sec. 200 was inserted. A federal constitution involves a distribution of powers between the central and the constituent units. To oversee this a federal court is essential—it is to interpret and guard the constitution. Moreover, it is to act as a tribunal to decide disputes between the constituent units and the federation or between the constituent units *inter se*. Thus a federal court in India was formally inaugurated on October 1, 1937 and it had its first sitting at New Delhi on December 6, 1937. The Federal Court had a threefold jurisdiction—(i) an exclusive jurisdiction to decide disputes between the centre and its constituent units or amongst the units *per se*; (ii) an advisory jurisdiction and the Governor-General could refer to it any legal question of public importance for its opinion; and (iii) a very limited appellate jurisdiction from the High Courts. Appeals lay to the Federal Court from “any judgement, decree or final order of a High Court”, on a certification from the High Court that the case involved a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the constitution. Barring this, the appellate jurisdiction of the Privy Council was kept intact. Appeals would go to the Privy Council from the Federal Court where the latter exercised original jurisdiction and in any other case, by leave of the Federal Court or of the King-in-Council.

The Federal Court consisted of a Chief Justice and two other Judges. By an Order-in-Council made under sec. 201 of the 1935 Act the salary of the Chief Justice was fixed at Rs. 7000 per month and that of the puisne Judges at Rs. 500 p.m. With effect from the 1st of February, 1948 the jurisdiction of the Federal Court was enlarged by the Federal Court (Enlargement of jurisdiction) Act I of 1948 in order to stop the flow of civil appeals to the Privy Council from Indian High Courts. The Privy Council's jurisdiction was taken away on 24 September 1949 by the Abolition of the Privy Council jurisdiction Act V of 1949 and

the Federal court was invested with the same jurisdiction with effect from 10 October, 1949. The last appeal was disposed of by the Privy Council on 15 December 1949 and on 26 January, 1950 the Federal Court yielded to the Supreme Court under the new constitution.

### 3. *The Supreme Court*

The Constitution of India came into force on 26 January, 1950 and the Supreme Court took over as the highest court of the land. The court has a three-fold jurisdiction—Original ; Appellate ; Advisory. It has original and exclusive jurisdiction to decide disputes (a) between the Government of India and one or more States ; or (b) between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more States on the other ; or (c) between two or more States in so far as it involves any question of law or fact on which the legal right depends : Art. 131. *Secondly*, it has also original jurisdiction to enforce fundamental rights under Art. 32 and can issue directions, orders or writs in the nature of *habeas corpus*, *mandamus*, *certiorari*, prohibition, or *quo warranto*. The Supreme Court's appellate jurisdiction falls under four heads : Constitutional ; Civil ; Criminal ; Appeal by special leave. The Court hears constitutional appeals from any judgement, decree or final order of a High Court on a certificate that the case involves a substantial question as to the interpretation of the Constitution. In case the High Court refuses such a certificate the Supreme Court may itself grant special leave to appeal if it is satisfied that a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution is involved. In civil matters, an appeal lies to the Supreme Court if the High Court certifies (a) that the case involves a substantial question of law of general importance, and (b) that in the opinion of the High Court the said question needs to be decided by the Supreme Court. In criminal cases, an appeal lies to the Supreme Court if the High Court (i) has, on appeal, reversed an order of acquittal of an accused person and sentenced him to death ; (ii) has withdrawn for trial before itself any case from any court subordinate to its authority and has in such a trial convicted the accused person and sentenced him to death ; or (iii) certifies that the case is a fit one for appeal to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court (Enlargement of Criminal Appellate Jurisdiction)

Act, 1970 has enlarged the appellate jurisdiction by inserting in (i) and (ii) "or imprisonment for life or a period of not less than 10 years" after "death sentence". In respect of special leave to appeal under Art. 136 the Supreme Court follows the same tests as laid down by the Privy Council. Art. 143 confers on the Supreme Court an Advisory Jurisdiction. And the President of India is empowered to refer any question of law or fact of public importance to the Supreme Court for its opinion. The law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all courts in India. The court combines in itself not only the functions of both the Federal Court and Privy Council, but also certain powers not possessed by any of them before.

The Supreme Court consists of a Chief Justice and 25 other Judges. The former gets Rs. 10,000 as monthly salary while the latter Rs. 9,000 each. The retirement is at 65.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE IMPERIAL CITY IN HER MAJESTY

Once, two hundred years ago, the trader came  
Meek and tame.  
Where his timid foot first halted, there he stayed,  
Till mere trade  
Grew to Empire, and he sent his armies forth  
South, and North,  
Till the country from Peshawur to Ceylon  
Was his own.

—R. Kipling : "A tale of two cities", in *Selected verse* (Penguin, ed. James Cochrane, 1989), p. 26.

Clive had in a letter to Pitt in 1759, suggested that "so large a sovereignty (as the Diwani of Bengal and the power that went with it) may possibly be an object too extensive for a mercantile company : it is to be feared that they are not themselves able, without the nation's assistance, to maintain so wide a dominion".<sup>1</sup> Subsequently the Company's dominion in India became transformed into the dominion of India. It would be accurate to speak of it as Britain's Indian empire. And Calcutta became the capital of this empire or the Imperial city. It is thus necessary to get at an idea of the empire and imperialism.

#### I. *Calcutta as the Imperial City*

##### (a) *Imperialism defined*

The nation-states motivated by patriotism and economic nationalism have launched their territorial aggrandisement in the backward regions of the globe where the native governments have failed to offer effective resistance to the Great Powers. Sometimes they have resorted to peaceful bargaining, sometimes to war to achieve their objectives. Usually 'imperialism' is applied to these phenomena as a collective term. This has a multitude of

1. Robert, P. E.—*History of British India* (3rd edn.), 179 (quoted).

meanings. Historians generally apply it to situations in which states acquire colonies or build empires. This process differs from simple conquest in two respects. *First*, in it the conquered are alien in language, culture or race to the conquerors. *Second*, in the alternative, the territories acquired overseas are not continuous. Patriots, on the other hand, consider it as an epithet of opprobrium to describe the territorial ambitions of enemy states. And communists apply the term to the historical epoch marking the last stage of capitalism.

It has been easier for European States to extend their powers over new lands. They have been able to acquire new land at the expense of the small, weak states or of the politically unorganised natives of the non-European world. Conquest has followed the paths of least resistance and had reflected the dictates of interest and opportunity. The advent of the European nations in India constitutes the characteristic expression of the will-to-power. India's Muslim rulers at the time had a huge standing army, but were weak as a sea-power. As a result, the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch, the Danes, and the English came and fought with each other to extend their control over India. The constant growth of English sea power ensured English colonial supremacy. In the long combat with France, England finally triumphed in India.<sup>2</sup>

#### (b) *The Indian Empire*

##### (i) *The first phase (1757-85)*

If Clive founded the British Indian State, Warren Hastings gave it coherence and made it politically viable. It was during his time that Calcutta became the capital—the revenue courts and capital were removed from Murshidabad to Calcutta in 1772. The reason for this removal was that the records and treasure had been insecure in Murshidabad which "a few dacoits might enter and plunder with ease".<sup>3</sup> After the Battle of Plassey (1757), the famous acquisition of the *Diwani* (1765) was the first great step by the Company towards territorial dominion. Clive had a

2. Schuman, F. L.—*International Politics* (1948), 511-2

3. Long, J.—*Calcutta and its neighbourhood* (1974), ed. S. Sengupta, 50.

certain rough-hewn, almost elemental force and a timeless energy which made him a true pioneer of empire. In the words of Burke : "He settled great foundations. When Lord Clive forded a deep water with an unknown bottom, he left a bridge for his successor over which the lame might hobble and the blind might grope their way".<sup>4</sup>

Hastings showed that the Company's territories could be defended against the strongest available union of Indian powers single-handed and without Europe's help. He also demonstrated that with sufficient resolution one man could contend the distant and facetious governments of Madras and Bombay. Henceforth there would not be *three* company's governments in India, but one—henceforth the British dominion in India was not only established but recognised as one of its great powers. And this dominion had to grow greater if it was not to become smaller. In this context Hastings may be called "the real founder of the British dominion in India—he found a revenue administration (but) left a State".<sup>5</sup> And Hastings left India in 1785.

## (ii) *The Second phase (1786-1818)*

It was Cornwallis (1786-93) who gave a definite form to the British Indian State and stamped on it his own characteristics. The Company's dominion in India became a distinct State both Indian and English for which the name given was 'Company Bahadur'. It presaged neither revolution nor transformation, but showed only the first stages of a new cycle of conquest, consolidation, prosperity and decline. The near bankruptcy of the Company brought in intervention of the State which replaced the child by the parent. The Regulating Act of 1773 bound Bombay and Madras to Hastings in unwilling subordination. The India Act of 1784 set up a double government by which the Company was overseen in London by a Minister known as the President of the Board of Control and in Calcutta by a Governor General in whose appointment the State had the dominant voice. Thus British India came under national control and became subject to the parliamentary directions of non-aggression, clean ad-

4. Bond, E. A. (ed)—*Speeches in the trial of Warren Hastings*, vol. IV. 329, 348.

5. Spear, P.—*A history of India* (Penguin, 1920), vol. II, 91-2.

ministration and attention to the people's welfare. And Cornwallis's first act was to assert the authority of the State and cleanse the administration. The new State was in fact in the framework of the Indian tradition for all Cornwallis's calculated Englishry. A 'Constitutional' governor became a virtually absolute Governor-General, independent presidencies became subordinate. The Governor-General was subordinate to London, but London was far-off and pre-occupied. Thus his position resembled that of a Bengal *Subahdar* nearly a century before. However, the new Company was not old Mughal writ large. Earlier Warren Hastings followed the Mughal pattern—he believed that the English should rule Indians on Indian lines through Indian agency. But Cornwallis proceeded on a different plan—he thought of the English as ruling Indians for their good, but on European lines. He introduced into Indian society two features—the rule of law and English landlordism. Cornwallis left in 1793.

Wellesley (1798-1805) firmly believed that the extension of British authority would be to the mutual benefit of the rulers and the ruled and he never missed any opportunity of bringing fresh principalities under his control, though this was definitely opposed to Pitt's India Act of 1784. The Peshwa, Sindhia, Holkar and the Nizam had all trained battalions officered by Frenchmen. Besides, Tipu Sultan was an avowed friend of the French. Wellesley was anxious to get these battalions disbanded and to replace French influence by British sovereignty. So, he decided to secure his object by a system of Subsidiary Alliance. This plan was simplicity itself. Under it the British Indian Government were to undertake the defence, internal and external, of their Indian allies. A stipulated force was to be maintained by the British for this purpose at the expense of the protected prince. And the prince was to cede to the British a part of his territories to ensure the regular payment of the stipulated subsidy. He would not be entitled to have any political relation with any foreign power. The alliance guaranteed the existing dominions of the Indian princes in exchange for their independence. The Nizam was the first to enter into the Subsidiary Alliance. Clive laid the foundation of the British Indian dominion; Warren Hastings saved it from an untimely dissolution. But the glory of building up the splendid empire belongs to Wellesley. He knew that an empire cannot be governed by men without adequate training.

So he founded the Fort William College at Calcutta for new recruits to the Civil Service.<sup>6</sup>

The final phase fell to Marquess of Hastings or Lord Moira (1813-23). He completed the unfinished work of Wellesley, after the latter's recall in 1805. His policy was enunciated by himself thus : "Our object ought to be to render the British Government *paramount* in effect, if not declaredly so. We should hold the other States as vassals, in substance though not in name ; not precisely as they stood in the Mughal Government, but possessed of perfect internal sovereignty and only bound to repay the guarantee and protection of their possessions by the British Government with the pledge of the two great feudal duties—*First*, they should support it with all their forces on any call. *Secondly*, they should submit their mutual difference to the head of the confederacy (our Govt.) without attacking each other's territories".<sup>7</sup>

The Nizam was under British tutelage ; and the Maratha power was completely broken. The Rajputs had neither the strength nor the inclination to challenge their new suzerains. In theory, the feudatory princes were the equal allies of the British ; in practice they had no political influence. The British authority was thus firmly established from the Sutlej to the Brahmaputra, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. Only the Punjab under Ranjit Singh and the Gurkha Kingdom of Nepal could claim to be sovereign States when Lord Hastings left India in 1823.<sup>8</sup> It may be noted that he brought into the subsidiary system 145 States in Central India, 145 States in Kathiwar and 30 States in Rajputana.

### (iii) *The Third Phase (1819-1857)*

Lord Amherst (1823-28) had to face the first Burmese War (1824-26). Rangoon was captured. By the treaty of Yandobo (1826) the Burmese government surrendered Arakan, Tenasserin.

6. Spear, *op. cit.*, 93-105.

7. The private journal of the Marquess of Hastings, 30-1.

8. Sen, S. N./Raychowdhuri, H. C.—The groundwork of Indian history (1935), 347.

Assam, Kachar, Jaintia and Manipur and agreed to keep a British Resident at Ava, their capital. Bharatpur was captured in an expedition led by Lord Combermere. Bentinck (1828-35) was a man of peace and an advocate of the policy of "let alone". Still on occasions he had to intervene. Thus he annexed Kachar in 1830, placed Mysore under temporary British administration in 1831, and added Coorg to the empire in 1834. Ellenborough (1842-44) annexed Sind in August, 1843; Dalhousie (1848-56) annexed the Punjab on 29 March, 1849. His administration marked the growth of the British empire at an unprecedented scale. His predecessor had acted on the principle of avoiding annexation if it could be avoided; Dalhousie acted on the general principle of annexing if he could do so legitimately. Dalhousie was a great organiser of victory and he "completed the fabric of British rule in India".

Dalhousie's annexation policy was the Doctrine of Lapse, formulated by the court of Directors in 1854. The doctrine was the practical application of his guiding principle that "the good of the governed" required the substitution of British rule for the "misrule" of Indian princes. It meant that in the absence of natural heirs, the sovereignty of dependent State would lapse to the paramount power. It also laid down that the succession of an adopted son could be valid only if ratified by the British Government. Thus formerly it was applied to Mandavi in 1839, to Kolaba and Jalaun in 1840 and Surat in 1842. Dalhousie applied it to Satara (1848), Baghat (1850), Udaipur (1852), and Jhansi (1853). *Secondly*, the second plank of the doctrine was the abolition of titular sovereignties. This was applied to the Peshawar (1853), Rajaship of Tanjore (1855) and Nawabship of Carnatic (1853). The third plank was misgovernment. This applied to Oudh (13 February, 1856). Wajid Ali the Nawab was deported to Calcutta and granted a pension of Rs. 12 lakhs a year. Dalhousie put the coping stone on the edifice, the foundation stone of which had been laid by Clive. And the successors—Warren Hastings, Wellesley and Marquis Hastings—had it reared up. "The treaty map of India was now complete and Dalhousie had the satisfaction of knowing that the whole of India from Cape Comorin to Kashmir acknowledge the suzerainty of the Queen".

(iv) *The final phase (1858-80)*

It may be noted that India was divided into two—British India and Indian India. The first was directly controlled by the Crown as a sovereignty, while the second through the Indian rulers called Princes under a Paramount power. Thus the British authority in India assumed two distinct but allied forms—*Sovereignty* and *Paramountcy*. And the latter was an adjunct to the former. There was Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 and the Queen took over from the Company the administration of India in 1858. On the eve of transfer of sovereignty from the Company to the Crown Lord Canning declared: "The Crown in England stands forth the unquestioned ruler and paramount power in all India". There were four periods of evolution of this Paramountcy. There was first "the ring-fence" policy (1757-1813), under which the British endeavoured to live within the ring-fence and beyond that they avoided intercourse with the chiefs. The second was the policy of "subordinate isolation" (1813-1858). During this period the Company made all Indian States subordinate to itself by making them enter into subsidiary system of alliances. The third period was marked by the policy of "subordinate union" (1858-1919), under which the Rulers were given the right of adoption and *sanads* and the policy of annexation abandoned. In the words of Dodwell: "The significance of these *sanads* was that the States were to be perpetuated as an integral part of the Indian system". And the fourth period continued the policy of "conference and cooperation" (1919-1947).<sup>9</sup>

Lord Lytton (1876-80) came to India as Viceroy in April 1876. He carried out the policy of "imperialism", after he was chosen by Disraeli, the Premier. In 1876 the Prime Minister passed the Royal Titles Act, conferring on the British Sovereign the title of *Kaiser-i-Hind* (Empress of India). One of the first acts of Lord Lytton was to proclaim the new "imperial" title at a magnificent Durbar held at Delhi on January 1, 1877—he proclaimed *Queen Victoria Empress of India*. And imperialism became full-fledged and came into its own. The Indian Princes were required to do homage to Her Majesty's Viceroy. They were thus "incorporated into the empire" of Great Britain.<sup>10</sup> Since

9. Biswas, A. R.—Indian legal and constitutional history (1988), 42-5.  
10. Sen/Raychaudhuri. op. cit., 392.

then imperialism in this form continued till August 15, 1947 when India became partitioned and independent. Two independent Dominions were set up in pursuance of sec. 1(1) of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 (10 & 11 Geo. VI.C. 30), namely, India and Pakistan. Accordingly the responsibility of the Crown ceased in respect of the government of British India and its suzerainty over the Indian States (Indian India) also ceased. Along with this were omitted, under sec. 7(2) of the Act, "from the Royal Style and Titles the words 'Indian Emperor' and the words 'Emperor of India'". And imperialism came to an end so far as India was concerned.

(c) *Calcutta the Imperial City*

The Crown take-over in 1858 retained Calcutta as the capital of the British Empire. It was to remain so for the next 53 years, i.e., till the Proclamation of Delhi as the new Capital in 1911. This change was formally announced at the Delhi Durbar on December 12, 1911 by King-Emperor, George V who was then on a visit to India with Queen Mary. A question may be asked why was the capital not removed from Calcutta to Delhi all these years? One answer was that the British did not like to repeat the performance of their predecessor, the Mughal. By supplanting the Turco-Afghan, the Mughals clinged to their predecessors' capital of Delhi. The Englishmen's imperial pride worked on the idea that what they had been giving was a new order altogether. Pax-Britannica was a new concept and it sought to desire its justification in a new identity, all its own. *Secondly*, Calcutta was more than an administrative headquarter—it was the centre of busiest trade and commerce in India. The British Empire was mainly a venture in mercantilist capitalism and no city had a better claim than the port-city of Calcutta for the purpose. A Calcutta Daily dated December 8, 1911 asked the pertinent question: "Has it occurred to ask why Downing street and St. Stephen's are in London rather than in York or Crew?" And the answer it gave was: "A little reflection will show that the present location of the British Government is due to the simple fact that London is more important than any other town in the United Kingdom. This is precisely the reason why Calcutta has been and always will be the capital of India. It is the most important city in India, the only city where the Government are



brought into contact with the great commercial interests and an enlightened public opinion. Delhi has neither commerce nor public opinion". *Thirdly*, the historic capital of the Grand Mughals would be the proper venue for a grand Durbar. The scene was set in an atmosphere of unprecedented pomp and grandeur. And Queen Marry wore "a crown with 4149 cut diamonds, 2,000 rose diamonds, 22 emeralds, 4 rubies and 4 sapphires". It was from this Durbar that the King-Emperor proclaimed :

"We are pleased to announce to our people that we have decided upon the transfer of the seat of the Government of India".

Calcutta is a port-city. Besides, it owed its extra-ordinary position as the second city of the Empire and one among the first twelve in the world in regard to its attainments in education and culture. The period from Charnock to Hardinge *i.e.* from 1690 to 1912 was a continuous link in the story of Calcutta. The British people felt proud for what they had done to Calcutta. Lord Curzon, a protagonist of imperial cult narrated to a Calcutta audience in 1903 the achievements of English Calcutta thus : "Calcutta is the capital not merely of a province, but of the Indian Empire. A glance of the buildings of the town, at the river and the roar and the smoke is sufficient to show that Calcutta is in reality a European city set down upon Asiatic soil. It is a monument to the energy and achievements of our race, for it is the second city to London in the entire British Empire".<sup>11</sup>

#### (d) *A first-class Trade Emporium*

##### (i) *Early efforts*

The trade of the English in Bengal first began from Balasore wherein they had a factory, because no English vessel ventured to sail up the Hooghly. Upto the mid-17th century only Dutch and Portuguese galiases could come up to the Hooghly, but not higher than Garden Reach and Betor. In 1650 the question of sailing up the Hooghly was much discussed. But the "Dutch ships of 600 tons burthen" performed this trick. One Captain Elliot tried but failed, owing to a lack of pilots. In 1668 the court of Directors renewed the bonus-offer and directed that 'di-

versable persons' should be trained as pilots and all persons in the vessels up and down the river be put on "taking depths, sholdings, setting of tydes, currents, distances, buoys and making drafts of the river".<sup>12</sup> Moreover, apprentices were encouraged at the company's expense. Because of these measures, in 1678 the *Falcon*, the first English vessel sailed up the river and penetrated inland to Hooghly with a cargo of bullion and goods worth £ 40,000.<sup>13</sup> The 1661 Charter provided for the Company's monopoly trade. And in 1668 the stock in trade was valued at £ 34,000—it rose to £ 65,000 in 1675. By Letters Patent issued in 1672 the import and export trades became customs-free. And in 1682 the stock value rose to £ 2,30,000. In 1686 the regular Pilot Service was established.

Prior to the foundation of Fort William, imports and exports were limited to certain articles. Exports from Bengal were classified into three categories—the first category included "rice, oil, butter, cucumber, cumin seeds, while the second category was meant for the Coromondal Coast in 1614 and this lot included dry ginger, turmeric, wheat and the like. And the third category was sent to the Coromandal Coast in 1684 and this lot included raw silk, long pepper, saltpetre etc. Imports to Bengal in 1864 included pepper, betelnut, chints etc.<sup>14</sup> The lascars sought and obtained service in British vessels from the very beginning of British trade in Bengal. Upto 1704 the port dues had been insignificant, for they did not reach even Rs. 500. Tonnage-pass money was realised in that year to the tune of Rs. 384. The rate was Re. 1 a ton. Saltpetre formed one of the chief articles of export. In 1709 the total receipt from dues on tonnage, pass money, fines etc. amounted to Rs. 1,665. In February 1710 a wharf was constructed before the Fort to ensure "security to the banks and a strengthening thereto"—it was made with bricks and a breast work raised.<sup>15</sup> The receipts dwindled during 1711-12 owing to the hostile activities of the French fleet. In 1714 the tonnage and pass money came to Rs. 1589.<sup>16</sup>

12. Wilson—Early annals, vol. I, 146.

13. Stevens, C. C.—Paper on the Port of Calcutta, 5, 7.

14. Wilson, op. cit., 397-99.

15. Wilson, op. cit., 317.

16. Wilson, op. cit., vol. II, part I, 218, 281, 344.

The Council ordered on 26 September, 1717 that a standing garrison of 220 should always be kept ready for service and located at different parts of Bengal. During 1709 to 1718, thirty-one sloops were engaged in trade. The private companies and free traders were called "interlopers" since they competed with the company. Moreover, the captains and pilots of vessels up and down the Hooghly were warned against harbouring any vessel without payment of duty and without permission. In 1727 the shipping of the Port of Calcutta amounted to 10,000 tons.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile there had been a great demand for saltpetre because of war in Europe in Queen Anne's time. The company's purchases in India acquired the name of "Investment", which was the public trade of the company. This was provided by *dadni* merchants. The Setts and Bysacks of Sutanuti were the most important *dadni* merchants. In 1748 the Calcutta Council persuaded the merchants to contract for *dadni* and ready money goods for about 30 lakhs of rupees. The Company's Investment in 1751-52 on the eve of its abandonment through *dadni* merchants was as follows: (1) *Dadni* contracts—Rs. 10,53,756; (2) Ready money goods—Rs. 3,52,054.<sup>18</sup> Omichand was the most influential merchant but his honesty was not above suspicion. And the council decided in 1753 to abandon the system of dealing with native merchants.<sup>19</sup> The Company dispensed with the native contractors and resolved to deal directly with the weavers and artisans through their *gomastas* entrusted with the inland trade. They had the Company's bag and *dustuck* and they bought and sold duty-free. Very soon these *gomastas* became a scourge to the people. Complaints of extortion began pouring in against them. The Nawab also protested. They bought and sold salt, betelnut, ghee, rice, straw, bamboo, fish, ginger, sugar, tobacco, coco, opium and other "native commodities". In 1759 thirty vessels sailed from Calcutta with 3,964 tons weight of merchandise.

## (ii) Ships and Ship-building

Ship-building began after 1770. Teakwood was then chiefly

17. Stevens, op. cit., 9-10.

18. Sinha, N. K.—The economic history of Bengal vol. I (1981), 6.

19. Wheeler—Early Records of British India, 224-5, 300-301.

used. Capt. Watson built a ship at his dockyard at Kidderpore and Warren Hastings was present with his lady at the launch and subsequent entertainment.<sup>20</sup> During the period from 1781 to 1821 more than 237 ships were built at the Kidderpore Docks at a cost of more than two million sterling. In 1818 the *Hastings*, a 74-gunship, was launched.

In this connection the number of vessels sent by European nations for trade to the East Indies deserves mention. At the beginning of the 18th century England sent 14, France 5, Holland 11, the Venetians and the Genoese together 9, Spain and the rest of Europe 6. In 1744 the English increased the number to 27, the Venetians and the Genoese sent 4 and the rest of Europe 9. In 1784, 300 European ships were employed, of which England had 68, the French 9, the Portuguese 18, while Russians and Spaniards brought up the remainder. In the 11 months from June, 1811 to April 1812 the import and export trade of the port came to about 9 million and a half sterling—it was carried in 600 vessels with 1,50,000 tons.

### (iii) *Duties imposed* .

The principal daily articles of import and export to and from Calcutta were as follows. Imports included—rice, mustard seed, gram, peas, salt, indigo seed, linseed, iron and steel, gur, sugarcane, brass and copper utensils, ghee, spices, cloth, thread, coconut oil, brass ornaments, umbrellas and pedlar's wares. And exports included—rice, gur, sugarcane and dates, gar, pan-leaf, tobacco, indigo, cloth, silk, mats, curds, vegetables, fish, pottery, bamboo and straw.<sup>21</sup> By the mid-18th century duties on articles for daily consumption began to be levied at an exorbitant rate. And Calcuttans petitioned the council in 1760 against this exaction. As a result the land custom duties were taken off, the *chowkees* removed and the collector's title also taken off.<sup>22</sup> In respect of salt there was an *advalorem* duty of 2½ per cent on Mahomedans and 5 per cent on Hindus. Salt had been a trade

20. Calcutta Review, vol. XXXV, 191—Calcutta in the olden time : its people'.

21. Smyth, Rulph—Geographical Statistical Report of the 24 Parganas, 42.

22. Proceedings dated 4 September, 1760 ; Long's Selections, footnote to page 220.

monopoly. And the Directors directed in their letter dated 24 December, 1776 that it should be "an exclusive trade."<sup>23</sup> On 20 June, 1788 the Government customs were abolished, but town duties remained. In May, 1795 the former on imports by sea were re-established, but the latter were abolished. However, in May 1801 the Calcutta town duties were re-established with certain exceptions. Moreover, tolls were imposed on goods and cargo imported by Tolly's Nullah at specified rates.

(iv) *The Bank of Bengal set up*

The Bank of Bengal was set up on January 1, 1809 under Act, 47, George III, section 2, chapter 68. It had a capital of 5,000,000 sicca rupees to be divided into 500 shares of 10,000 sicca rupees each. One hundred shares should be subscribed by Government and 400 shares by individuals.<sup>24</sup> Cowries were used as coins for petty bazar transactions and subsequently their use became obsolete.

(v) *Port management*

All these years the Port affairs had been managed by the Govt. Marine Department. In 1870 the Port Trust was constituted by Act V of 1870 with 12 Commissioners, this number being increased to 13 in 1887 and to 15 in 1890. Under sec. 7 of the Indian Ports Act IX of 1889 the Commissioners were appointed conservators of the Port and entrusted with the management of the navigable port of the river and its channels. They had two-fold duties—(1) the surveying, sounding, dredging etc. : and (2) providing facilities for trade. The Traffic Manager manages the Jetties, the Docks, the Inland Vessels wharves and the Port Trust Railway, while the Dy. Conservator controls the Port approaches and the Harbour Master's Department. The capital cost of the dock works stood at Rs. 3,34,44,870 by the end of 1899-1900 with an expenditure of Rs. 29,42,624.

(vi) *Imports and exports*

The figures for the last 30 years of the 19th century indicate the steady progress of the import and export foreign trade in Cal-

23. Millet—Minute on the Revenue of Calcutta, paras 68-9, 76-89.

24. Wilson—Early Annals, vol. 1, 400.

cutta. A statistical survey shows that the aggregate value of the foreign sea-borne trade of Calcutta during the years 1891-92, 1892-93, 1893-94, 1894-95 and 1895-96, exclusive of Government transactions, for articles of import only, amounted to Rs. 28,65,72,342, Rs. 25,43,01,406, Rs. 30,78,45,342, Rs. 27,49,43,275 and Rs. 28,18,46,990 respectively. The value of exports for the years 1896-97, 1897-98, 1898-99, 1899-1900, 1900-1901 has been Rs. 4,496 lakhs, Rs. 4,532 lakhs, Rs. 4,574 lakhs, Rs. 4,998 lakhs and Rs. 5,485 lakhs respectively. A comparison of these figures with the trade statistics at the dawn of the 18th century "will give a far better idea", as pointed out by A. K. Ray, "than words can convey, of the stupendous strides with which the Port of Calcutta has reached, in less than 200 years, its present position as an Emporium of Trade of the first magnitude the beneficent, all-powerful and world-pervading protection of the Union Jack, inspite of the ceaseless freaks of a treacherous river".<sup>25</sup>

Even after the transfer of the capital to Delhi, the increasing importance of Calcutta as a commercial centre is illustrated by the value of trade recorded in the year ending 31 March, 1913. The aggregate figures amounted to Rs. 15.706 lakhs, of which Rs. 6,141 lakhs represented imports from abroad and Rs. 9,565 lakhs as exports of Indian merchandise. These show that imports increased by 940 lakhs while exports by Rs. 978 lakhs.<sup>26</sup> Even after Independence a comparative statistics of the four major ports—Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Vishakhapatnam, Cochin and Kandla—in 1959-60 reveals that Calcutta handled 25.10 per cent of imports and 41.79 per cent of exports of the total in regard to the gross weight of the cargo handled by them. In this Calcutta had 5,050,000 tons of imports, of which coastal trade accounted for 1,297,000 tons, while foreign trade 3,763,000 tons. In regard to exports, Calcutta handled 4,747,000 tons, of which coastal trade accounted for 1,300,000 tons and foreign trade 3,449,000 tons.<sup>27</sup> In this connection the duties collected at the Calcutta Customs Zone and by the Collectorate of Central Excise, Calcutta were as follows : Import duties in 1955-60, 1960-61 and 1961-62

25. Ray, A. K.—Calcutta, 247-82.

26. Ray, N. B.—Calcutta, 86.

27. CSO—Statistical Handbook of the Indian Union (1961), Table 13.

were respectively Rs. 43,59,73,414, Rs. 48,80,29,466 and Rs. 58,26,84,606 ; export duties in those years were Rs. 8,93,56,072, Rs. 7,95,66,335 and Rs. 7,15,72,220. The Union excise duty collected by the Central Excise Collectorate, Calcutta and Orissa in those 3 years were Rs. 51,16,53,856, Rs. 46,89,50,502, Rs. 55,56,21,000 respectively. A separate collectorate named the Central Excise Collectorate, West Bengal was formed in 1960-61 and its collection in 1960-61 and 1961-62 amounted to Rs. 19,81,47,200 and Rs. 22,62,33,000 respectively. This reveals that Calcutta accounts for about 42 per cent and 41 per cent of the total for Orissa and West Bengal.<sup>28</sup>

### III. *Calcutta's nomenclature and architecture*

The growth of a city is marked by building edifices and naming localities and this is shown below.

#### (a) *Localities named*

Certain principles are perceived in the names of localities. In the first place a locality takes its name from its prominent natural features. Calcutta, it has been explained before, took its name from 'Kolkata', i.e., lap cut open by riverine indentation. Another name was "Buruniardesh", meaning land liable to inundation or a tidal swamp. Thus the name, *Balliaghata* is derived from the sandy deposit in the bed of the Adiganga flowing through it.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, localities came to be called by the names of deities as illustrated by *Kalikhshetra*. The deities gave their names to the localities or in some cases the names were derived from the rites and ceremonies associated with their worship and feasts. Thus came the names of Chitpur (from *Chitreswari*), Sutanuti, Govindpur, Bhawanipur, Kalighat, Laldighi, Lalbazar, Birji, Birjitala (from *Brajanath* a name of Govinda of *Vishnu*), Sasthitala, Panchanatala, Sivatala, Kalitala, Siddheswaritala, Burabazar (from *Bura*, old man, as Siva is fondly called by devotees). Radhabazar, Chaurangi, Charakdanga (the site of Siva's swinging festival) Rathatala (under the shade of *Rath* or Jagannath's car). Thirdly, the naming took place after prominent trees in the loca-

28. Department of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Calcutta, Table 14.

29. Bipradas—*Manasa-mangala* (1495-6).

lities. Thus originated Bartala, Nimtala, Nebutala, Kadamtala, Beltala, Boinchitala, Banstala, Gabtala, Jhawtala, Amratala, Badamtala, Taltala, Champatala, Dalimtala. Bar = *Ficus indica* ; Nim = *Azadirachta indica* ; Nebu = *citrus indica* ; Kadam = *Nauclea Kadamba* ; Bel = *Aegle Marmelos* ; Boinch = *Flacourtia repens* ; Bans = *Bambusa arundinacea* ; Gab = *Diospyros glutinosa* ; Jhaw = *Casuarina muricata* ; Amra = *spondias dulcis* ; Badam = *Terminalia catapa* ; Tal = *Borassus flabelliformis* ; Champa = *Magnolia champaca* ; Dalim = *Panica granatum*.

Today *Bartala* survives in Burtola Street and Burtola thana. It is the banian tree nearby that lent its name—Nimtala, Nebutala, Banstala, Amratala, and Taltala also survive in the names of streets, while Taltala in both the street and the thana. Kadamtala lives in the name of a *ghat*, whereas Boinchitala, Badamtala, Gabtala and Jhawtala in the people's memory. *Puddapukur* got its name from a tank full of Padma, meaning the lotus and water-lilies. *Entally*, originally, *Hintally*, is derived from *Hintal* (phoenix poludosa) a species of date-palm growth in tidal swamps. To the poor this gave its leaves for thatch, its small trunks for sticks to scare the snakes away with and its longer trunks for rafters to the huts. Simlea was derived from the *Simul* or Cotton tree. Hogulkuria got its name from *Hogla* (*Typha elephantina*) a species of elephant-grass growing in abundance in ponds and ditches and meant a number of huts thatched with the Hogla leaves. *Kapas* (*Gossypium*) gave its name to Kap langa. Goltapukur and Goltala had their names not from the rotundity of the tanks originally excavated, but because they were stagnant cesspools that grew in their marshy beds the *golpata* with which huts and umbrellas are thatched. *Fourthly*, names were derived from natural configuration or events. Thus, Mirzapur is derived from a marshy condition, and not from a Muhamedan "Mirza Saheb". Its original name was Mritaja-pur, i.e. a hamlet begot from 'mrit' or mud. Thuntuneah got its name from the soil considered as hard as brick. Pataldanga had a friable soil for the cultivation of *patal* (*Cucurbita dioica*) a delicacy in herbal diet. Jhamapukur was so called because its soil caked harder than that of Thuntuneah when a tank was dug within it. Kantapukur was full of spinous shrubs when it was cleared of jungle and had a tank made in it. *Hedua* is a corruption of *Hrad*—a lake—the tank is famous for its underground springs. It is similar to the tank



at Wellington Square, that cost Rs. 2,76,000 and took 2½ years to dig because of numerous springs in the site. Dingabhanga ("broken boats") and *Ooltadingi* ("boats capsized") got their names from boat-accidents caused in the creeks flowing through these localities.

The *fifth* kind of naming was associated with industries or occupations of the classes of the populace. Thus Mechuabazar and Nikaripara were associated with fishermen that tied their boats in the creeks and lived on their banks. Kolinga, Molunga and Nimakpakta derived their names from salt-workers and salt-works. Similarly Moocheepara and Moocheebazar are associated with the cobblers and shoemakers. The Portuguese kept fowls and gave the name Murghihatta to the locality they lived in. Similarly *Armanitola* came to be associated with the Armenians. The population had been increasing at the time by leaps and bounds. So the Court of Directors enjoined that the Company's workers be allotted "separate districts" in the town for their accommodation. Accordingly, the Collector of Calcutta classified tenants into categories in terms of their occupation and allotted to each category or group a distinct quarter in the town. Thus originated *toias* and *tolis* (diminutive of *tola*) meaning quarters of different trade guilds. For example, Kumartuli for the kumars (potters), Colootala for the kalus (oil pressers), Jeliatala for the jalias (fish-catchers), Domtooly for the doms or scavengers and basketmakers, Goaltooly for the goalas (Holwell's 'palanquinbearers', milkmen), Ahiritolas for the Ahirs (Behari goalas), Cossaitola for the Cossais (butchers), Pattuatola for the Pottuas (painters), Sankaritola for the Sankaris or Sankshabanias (conch-shell-workers). Similarly came into use Beparitola for the Beparis (petty traders), Kambulitola for the Kambalis (dealers in blankets), Haripara for the Haris (para=quarter for sweepers), Kansaripara for the Kansaris or bell-metal workers, Kamarpara and Kamardanga for the Kamars or blacksmiths. Others are Musalmanpara, Ooryapara, Darjipara (for the tailors), Khalasitola (for the lascars), Dhobapara (for the washermen), Telipara (for the oil mongers), Beniapara and Beniatola (for the Baniyas or traders), Badiapara and Badiadanga (for the gypsies), Choortarpara (for the carpenters), Jugipara (for the weavers), Sakrapara (for the goldsmiths), Sikdarpara (for the vendors of articles carried on pack-bullocks).

The *sixth* pattern of naming is manifest in the association of hats or markets with the important articles sold therein. Thus came Darmahata and Darmagulley (place for bamboo-mats), Sabjihatta (for vegetables), Machhohatta and Mecchuabazar (for fish), Amhati (for sale of mangoes), Dahihatta (for sale of sour whey), Moirahatta (for sweet-sellers), Sutahatta (for thread), Chinipati (for sugar), Maidapati (for flour), Sinduripati (for vermillion), Kapuriapati (for clothes), Chaulpati (for rice).

The *seventh* kind is associated with prominent persons, either the ruler or the saint. Thus Maniktala is derived from the Muslim saint Pir Manik. The Fouzdar of Hooghly had his Calcutta Court—he was the Magistrate of the Indian Community even after the English settlement at Calcutta—near the mosque in Lower Chitpur Road, a little away from its junction with Colootolla. Hence the locality is called “Foujdari Balakhana”. The only bazar lay close to it, called Subah Bazar corrupted into Sobha Bazar—it was the Bazar of the Subah (Govt.) of Bengal.

The *eighth* pattern was to name the localities after the gardens of the native bankers and banians, brokers and *gomostas*. During the period from 1757 to 1800 the reclamation of the waste and jungle lands became rapid. The garden-houses were numerous in the east. This garden-keeping mode was taken over from the Dutch. The famous one was Boitakkhana. Many wealthy people had garden-houses both on the east and on the west of the Mahratta Ditch, but more on the east than on the west of it. The Circular road built out of the earth dug for the ditch came at first to be called the Boitakkhana Road. This name was forgotten by the end of the 18th century. There was a banian tree at the crossing of the Boitakkhana Road with Bowbazar Street and the traders used to discuss the prices of articles they brought to vend. People thought that the *baithak* of the traders had lent its name to the locality. In fact mouza Boitakkhana is found in the Dihi Panchannagram maps far to the east of the Marhatta Ditch. In *Hicky's Gazette* in 1781 there is a mention of “a Garden-house situate of Bread and Cheese Bungalow, opposite the great tree (banian) and forms the angle of the two roads”. In the same year Henry Cowen set up a school at the “Bread and Cheese Bungalow or Boytacannah”. In January 1802 “that well-raised lower-roomed house and garden “was announced for sale without reserve”. In the map of 1784 the whole length of the road from

Lall Bazar upto Circular Road and a portion of the Circular Road itself was called "Boytaannah". Bowbazar is a corruption of *Bahubazar* (bride's bazar) where a number of petty bazars was held. It is said that one Biswanath Matilal, a famous banian, gave it to one of his daughters-in-law. But A. K. Ray in his *short history* of Calcutta (Reprint, 1982, p. 288) says that he has "failed to trace the *Bahu* daughter-in-law of Biswanath Matilal to whose share the bazar is said to have fallen and to whom the name is due." There were garden houses of Barreto, Sukeas, Bysack and Huzuri Mall, Omichand and Govindaram Mitter—the latter two had these in Ooltadanga in the native quarters of the town.

Perrin's garden to the north of the town was named after Captain Perrin who owned several ships. His ship *Sceptre* was seized by the Company in 1707. The garden served the Company's covenanted servants during the Rotation Government. It became out of use in 1752 and was sold for Rs. 25,000. Bagbazar is situated at its site and it owes its name to the *bag* or garden. Surman's garden lay to the south of the town. Surman owned both Belvedere House and the garden, which were sold by public auction and purchased by Captain Tolly of *Nullah* fame. Hastings purchased it subsequently for the Governor's garden-house. He had another garden-house on the south of it—it was sold by Sir Charles Imhoff to the Nawab Nazim. Belvedere House was originally built by Prince Azim-us-Shan in about 1700. The Governor of Hooghly used to reside in it occasionally.<sup>30</sup> Clive had a garden-house at Dum-Dum, Dr. Taylor at Garden Reach, and Colonel Watson at Watgunge. Lord Auckland had one at Belgachia which passed on to the Tagores. Debendranath Tagore sold it to the Paikpara Raja owing to the failure of the Union Bank.

The garden owned by the native residents were at first not named after their owners. Such were Chorebagan (its jungle sheltering thieves), Badoorbagan (for sheltering bats), Kalabagan (for plaintain orchard), Phoolbagan, Panbagan, Narkelbagan, Bakulbagan, Hartukibagan etc. Jorabagan was named after the pair of gardens—those of Omichand and Govindram Mitter—at Ooltadingi. A road was made to reach the place and called Jorabagan Road as in Upjohn's map of 1793-94. Hatibagan was the garden where the Nawab's elephants were kept during the scige

30. Buckland—Bengal under the Lt. Governors, Vol. II, 1212-30.

of Calcutta in 1756. Settbagan owned by the Setts had an area of 110 bighas and on 11 September, 1707 the English Council abated its rent by Rs. 55. Mention may be made of Rutton Sarcar's garden, Rambagan, Rajabagan named after Raja Rajballav who sought and got against the Nawab the Company's protection, Nandanbagan, the pleasure garden of Nandarama, the black zamindar, and Mohunbagan, named after Rajah Gopi Mohan Deb, father of Rajah Radhakanta Deb Bahadur. *Keranibagan* recalls the early days of the Company when clerk-ships were the monopoly of the East Indians.

Finally, the localities came to be named after the prominent persons in the service of the Government e.g., Dalhousie Square, Stuart Hogg Market etc. Streets, ghats, lanes, bye-lanes, tanks and squares were named after them. Historical persons were also associated with them. In the list of streets and lanes Hindu names preponderate; next come European and Eurasian names; then the Mahomedan names. After Independence, jingoistic nationalism has shortened the second list so much so that even the name of the founder, father of the city, Charnock, is omitted. Formerly the Calcutta Collectorate was situated at 3, Charnock Place, now replaced by 11, Netaji Subhas Road. At this the spirit of Job Charnock may cry with a loud voice like his spiritual master Jesus Christ (St. Mathew, XXVII, 46): 'E'-li, E'-li, la'-ma Sa-bach'-tha-ni?' that is to say, 'My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?' This puts to shame the so-called patriotism in Edith Cavell's words: 'Patriotism is not enough'.

#### (b) *Historic places and buildings*

A brief description of these is noted below:

1. *The Armenian Church*—This is the oldest Church in Calcutta. It was originally built as a wooden structure in 1707. It was designed by Levon Ghevond, an Armenian architect from Persia, brought from New Julfa near Ispahan. It was raised by public subscription and through the efforts of Aga Nazir. In

31. Latimer, E.—Handbook to Calcutta and environs (1963); Cotton, H. E. A.—Calcutta, old and new (Reprint, 1980); Carey, W. H.—The good old days of Honourable John Company (1980); Blechyn-den, K.—Calcutta past and present (1978); Roy, B. V.—Old Calcutta cameos (1946).

1724 the wooden structure was replaced by a building of brick and mortar. The church was renovated and restored by Agha Petrus Aratoon in 1765. The steeple accommodates a handsome three-dialled clock, presented by Agha Arrakiel in 1792. The floor of the vestibule and of the churchyard is a mass of ancient tomb stones, the earliest of which bears the date, 11 July, 1630. The Armenians claim to be the first nation to have embraced Christianity as early as 301 A.D. On the east from the centre of the Sanctuary, rises the Holy Altar, adorned with cross, gospels and 12 candle sticks symbolising Christ and his apostles.

2. *The Asiatic Society*—It was founded by Sir William Jones on 15 January 1784, a year after his arrival as a Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court, Calcutta. He was an adept in legal intricacies, a master of several oriental languages and a linguist of repute. He discussed with the leading citizens the formation of a research group. This led to the birth of the Asiatic Society. Sir William was the first President and Warren Hastings the Governor-General its patron. In his first speech he explained the ideals of the Society: "The bounds of its investigations will be the geographical limits of Asia and within these limits its enquiries will be extended to whatever is performed by man or produced by nature". The meetings used to be held in the Grand Jury's Room of the Supreme Court. In 1805 the Government of India sanctioned the free site which the Society continues to occupy. The building erected upon it at the corner of "Park Street and Chowringhee", was designed by Captain Lock of the Bengal Engineers and completed in 1806 by a French architect Jean Jacques Pichau. The Society published 20 volumes of "Asiatic Researches" between 1788 and 1830. The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal is another publication. The Society celebrated its bicentenary on 15 January, 1984 and was declared by the Government of India as "an institution of national importance".

3. *The Assembly House*—This was designed by J. Greaves, London and constructed by Martin & Co., Calcutta at a cost of about Rs. 21,50,000. The foundation stone was laid by Sir Stanley Jackson, the Governor of Bengal, on 9 July, 1928 and formally opened by him on 9 February, 1931. It is situated in well-laid-out gardens adorned with statues of earlier administrators and enclosed within iron railings. The structure has thus a magnificence commensurate with its high office. From the

upper balcony on the Assembly hang 33 portraits of national leaders. The chamber is fully air-conditioned and it has its electric installation concealed. Access to the chamber is from the south, east and north, while entrance to the gallery is from the west.

4. *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad*—It is the Bengal Academy of literature inaugurated in July, 1893 at the Sovabazar residence of Raja Benoy Krishna Deb Bahadur. The founders were the Raja himself, L. Liotard and Kshetrapal Chakraborty. The object was to popularise Bengali language among the western savants. From 1894 the name was changed into Bengali, *Bangiya Sahitya Parishad*, and proceedings began to be recorded in Bengali. The foundation day of adopting the Bengali name is taken as April 29, 1894, corresponding to Bengali—17th Baisakh. 1301 B S. The first President was Ramesh Chandra Dutt with Rabindranath Tagore and Nabin Chandra Sen as two Vice-Presidents. In 1901 Maharaja of Cossimbazar gifted 7 cottahs of land for the permanent building of the Institute. After the construction of a new house on the donated site the Parishad shifted there on December 6, 1908. It has a big library—it is a valuable storehouse of old books and manuscripts.

5. *Belvedere*—It is believed to have been built by Prince Azim-us-Shan, the Governor of Bengal and Behar and the grandson of Emperor Aurangzeb. Belvedere was the country seat of the Governor of Fort William since 1769-70. It seems Warren Hastings leased out the garden attached to Belvedere to Major Tolly in 1775 with the right of resumption. After Tolly's death in 1784 the garden-house remained in the possession of his relations. In 1802 the sale of the house was advertised in the *Calcutta Gazette* under orders of Tolly's attorney. It was described as "a large commodious and well-known house, called Belvedere House, with 72 bighas, 8 cottahs, and 4 chittaks of land". Since then the house passed through several owners in turn.

In 1854 it was sold to the East India Company who chose it as the official residence of the Lt. Governors of Bengal. It continued to be thus used till 1912 when the capital was removed to Delhi. The Viceroy used it when he came to Calcutta. It was to this house that Sir Phillip Francis was brought on 17 August

1780 when he was wounded in the famous duel with Warren Hastings. Its architecture is a mixture of a variety of styles and proportions and described as "a Free Italian Renaissance style developed on an ordinary Anglo-Indian building".

At present it accommodates the National Library. The library has a history. A Calcutta library had been established in 1835 at the house of Dr. F. Strong in Esplanade Row. In 1841 it was shifted to Fort William College, then to Metcalfe Hall (junction of Hare Street/Strand Road) which became later the Imperial Library in 1902. At that time it had a collection of one lakh volumes. Today it has a stock of 17½ lakhs of volumes. The library possesses 5 lakhs official documents, 72,000 maps and 3,000 manuscripts.

6. *Chowringhee*—The broad highway of Chowringhee owes its name to a small village of thatched huts and marshy pools. Originally it formed a part of the ancient narrow pathway—the pilgrim route leading from Murshidabad on to the village of Chitrapore (Chitpore) and thence to the famous shrine at Kali-ghat. Chowringhee was the first road in Calcutta to be illuminated with gas lamps on 6 July, 1859 and the first to be provided with a footpath, constructed over a filthy drain, which started from Dharmatolla and ended opposite the Cathedral.

7. *The Dalhousie Square (Bibadi Bagh)*—This square in the heart of the city was named after the Marquis of Dalhousie, Governor-General of India from 1848 to 1856. The tank in the centre has a number of natural springs to keep the level of water the same throughout the year. It is one of the oldest spots in Calcutta associated with the British in Bengal. This tank supplied drinking water to the founder, Job Charnock and his friends. In those days it was known as "the Green" because of the fields surrounding it and covered more than 25 acres of ground. Later it was known as "the Park" and "Tank Square". On the southern side flowed the creek crossed by 3 bridges, while on the north stood the first English Church, St. Anne's with its steeple pointing heavenward. Later it became "an extensive tank surrounded by a substantial brick masonry and an exterior palisade and having a flight of wide steps at each end, east and west". As a result of this masonry wall, some thought, it derived its subsequent names of Lal Bagh (Red Garden) and Lal Dighi (Red Tank). Others

thought that during *Holi* festival a vast quantity of red powder (*Kumkum*) used to be sold and scattered in and around this tank in temporary bazar erected for the purpose and this lent its name to the Dalhousie Square as *Laldighi*. The square is now named *Bibadi Bagh* after the freedom fighters Benoy, Badal and Dinesh, who became martyrs.

8. *Eden Gardens*—These public grounds were laid out in 1835 by the Misses Eden, the sisters of Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India (1835-42). The Burmese pagoda is situated in the grounds—it was built in Prome during 1852 by Ma Kin, widow of Maung Honon, ex-Governor of Prome. Originally it contained a gem-studded image of the Buddha. Dalhousie decided, in his visit to Prome in 1853, to remove it to Calcutta. Accordingly it was dismantled and shipped in the Company's vessel *Shwang Gong* and in 1854 it reached Calcutta. It was re-erected by Burmese carpenters at a cost of Rs. 6,000. The Calcutta Cricket Club is also situated in these gardens. Recently there has been a cricket stadium built for Test Matches.

9. *The Fort William*—The Old Fort was built by the early English settlers to the west of the Dalhousie Square (The great Tank) by way of protection to their Factory and Settlement. Its construction began during the governorship of Sir Charles Eyre (1700-1701) and subsequent governors added to it till it was completed during 1717-20. The Fort was heavily damaged during Siraj-ud-Dowlah's attack on Calcutta in 1756. This necessitated the construction of a new fort. After the removal of the ruins of the old fort the present House etc. was built on the site.

The foundation for the new Fort was laid in October, 1757. The site was chosen by Lord Clive, Governor of Fort William (1758-67). The total cost amounted to two million pounds sterling. It was completed in 1773. The Fort is situated in Govindpur. It is an irregular Octagon of which 5 sides face landward and 3 to the river. It encloses an area of two square miles and is surrounded by a moat which, in an emergency, can be flooded from the river. Named after William III, it is unique in that no shot has been fired from it in battle. It can accommodate a garrison of 10,000 men and mount hundreds of guns of varied calibre on its battlements. The Fort has been called by Mrs. Kindersley "a town within itself".



10. *The General Post Office (G.P.O.)*—It is one of the most dignified buildings in Calcutta : it caters to the needs of the people as a vital public utility service. It was designed by Walter Granville and construction started in 1864. After completion it was opened to the public in 1868. The total cost incurred was 6½ lakhs. Overlooking the placid waters of the miniature lake at the centre of the Dalhousie Square, its majestic dome and Corinthian columns give to it both grace and dignity. A large illuminated clock crowns the central porch below the dome. The south-east angle of the building is semi-circular in formation—it leads to a flight of steps to a lofty circular hall. The site on which the G.P.O. stands covers part of the old Fort William.

11. *The Government House (Raj Bhavan)*—It takes its place as one of the most imposing buildings in India. It was erected at the suggestion of Lord Wellesley (elder brother of the Duke of Wellington), Governor-General of Fort William (1798-1805). In a report to the Court of Directors of the Company he said "India should be Governed from a Palace, not from a counting-house, with the ideas of a Prince, not with those of a retail dealer in muslin and indigo". The present Government House is the third building used by the highest Government official. The first was a simple structure located inside the old Fort premises. The second building used by the Governor-General was called Buckingham house. Here Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General resided for sometime before he moved to the Hastings House. The Buckingham house was subsequently occupied by subsequent Governors-General. On assuming office the Marquis of Wellesley considered the Buckingham House inadequate and ordered its demolition along with the Council House to the west of it. And on the combined site he commanded the third official residence to be built.

Designed by Charles Wyatt of the Bengal Engineers and nephew of the well-known English architect James Wyatt, the foundation stone was laid on 5 February, 1799. The cost of the building was Rs. 20 lakhs. It was opened by Lord Wellesley on 26 January, 1803 with a banquet for 800 persons in honour of the treaty of Amiens. Lord Valentia, one of the distinguished guests reported : "The State Rooms were for the first time lighted up. At the upper end of the largest was placed a very rich Persian

carpet, and in the centre of that a *masnad* of crimson and gold formerly composing part of the ornaments of Tipu Sultan's throne". The throne still remains in the throne room of Raj Bhavan.

Raj Bhavan is still a palace, in the Queen Anne style of architecture with Georgian pediments and porticos, built on the pattern of Kedleston Hall, Lord Curzon's ancestral home in Derbyshire. It stands on 6 acres of land with coloured flowerbeds, green lawns and gravel walks screened all around by a forest of tall trees. It remained the residence of the Viceroy of India till 1914 when the Imperial Capital was shifted to Delhi. The building has 60 large rooms. This is now the residence of the Governor of Bengal.

12. *The High Court*—This imposing building in the Gothic style of architecture has in the centre a Gothic tower 180 feet high. The building is a replica of the famous Staal-Haus (cloth hall) at Ypress in Belgium. And the story is that when the original Staal-Haus was destroyed in World War I, it was rebuilt from the plans of the Calcutta High Court. But the Staal-Haus has an impressively tall belfry, whereas the height of the High Court tower has been conditioned by the subsidence which became apparent soon after the building got under way in 1864 and later aggravated by the great Behar earthquake of 1934. The structure was completed in 1872. All columns are ornamented with capitals of Caen stone, no two being alike. Designed by Walter Granville, Architect to the Government of India in 1864, it was erected on the site of the old Supreme Court, which succeeded the old court House in Dalhousie Square. The building rectangular in shape is built around the 4 sides of a quadrangle and lined on the interior with arcaded cloisters leading to various courts and law departments.

Though the High Court is splendid from without, it is far more impressive within. There is a Judge's corridor like an avenue of symmetrical trees—acres of extravagant wood panelling; high vaulted ceilings; and many valuable paintings, one by Zoffany, of Sir Elijah Impey in wig and scarlet robes. There is a modern bar styled Cherchen after an oasis in the Takla Makan desert, in one of the corridors where thirsts may be quenched between verbal marathons. Among many prized old records is a writ of summons issued by the Supreme Court to Fort William, three

yards long and handwritten in the exquisite copper-plate style of the age. The interior contains busts of Sir C. M. Ghose, Baron Sinha of Raipur, Sir Rashbehary Ghosh and Sir R. C. Mitter. The walls of the court-rooms contain fine oil paintings of King Edward VII and King George V. The beautiful foliated pillars in front of the building have allegorical figures among their branches so that justice, truth, benevolence, charity appear to be hiding in trees.

### 13. *The Hogg Market (New Market)*

This market named after the second chairman of the Corporation of Calcutta—Sir Stuart Hogg, Justice of the Peace was completed in 1874 at a cost of Rs. 6½ lakhs. To Calcuttans the spacious red-brick building having a frontage of 300 feet is a fascinating attraction known as the "New Market". The main entrance is by the Lindsay Street named after Robert Lindsay, second son of the 5th Earl of Balcarres who came to India as a writer in 1772. The market is unique in many respects. Almost everything is available here. It is rumoured that a ghost walks the empty corridors of the market at night and cries "Peace, peace".

14. *The Kali Temple*—The present temple of the goddess of Kali at Kalighat is said to be nearly a mile or more to the south-west of the older temple, which stood at Bhowanipore in the 16th century. It is situated on the bank of the old bed of the Ganges at a distance of about 3 miles from Fort William. It is a massive masonry structure built with small bricks. It is 90 feet high—it stands on a square base of 75 feet on each side. There is a long aisle on the side with raised platforms all around. A door-way occupies the centre of both the south and east sides of the main building. The present temple is of recent origin—it was erected by the Sabarna Zamindars of Barisha in or about 1809. But it was an innovation of an old temple, the existence of which can be traced to the middle of the 16th century. There is a spacious Natmandir to the south (front) of the temple. There are other smaller temples near the Kali temple, such as that of Shyanraya (Krishna), built in the early 17th century. The face of the idol of Kali is triangular-shaped and made of very fine black marble—it rests on a huge square-shaped block of red granite forming the trunk. The hands, tongue, eyebrows etc. of the idol are made

of gold. This sanctuary is reported to have Sati's little toe of the right foot.

15. *The Marble Palace*—The marble place in Mukhtaram Babu Street was built in 1835 by Raja Rajendra Mullick Bahadur and it remains the Mullick's home. It is undoubtedly the grandest, most pretentious and extra-ordinary of Calcutta's stately homes, and a city showpiece. The spacious grounds, artificially laid out, are respondent, with bronze and marble statues, *inter alia*, of Venus, Sophocles, Psyche and Demonsthenes. The sudden transition from the unbeautiful exterior to the pleasant lawns within is enchanting—it awakens memories of ancient glory of Greece and Macedonia. In the centre of the gardens, near a fountain of murmuring, cascading water, stands a statue of the founder of the palace born in 1819. The Thakurbari stands in the north. To the east are archways on which is a dais, the scene of the daily puja—the prayer ritual of the Hindus. At the southern end of the garden in a grotto sits a white marble *sannyasi* (hermit) in prayerful devotion, while lie nearby a Greek goddess and a *Bodhi-sattva* in deep meditation. The lawns to the west are dotted with numerous statues and marble curios of which there is a carved fountain with a figure of Neptune complete with trident and fishes. The entrance to the palace is by the west door which leads to halls of marble composed of 90 different varieties, procured from almost every part of the globe. The walls and ceiling are gorgeously decorated and provided with chandeliers of prismatic glass. The floor in each hall has an exquisite design of coloured mosaic, each having a different pattern.

Within are acres of painting (some to Rubens, Murillo, Titian) ; acres of Italian marble on walls and floor ("Call it the marble Palace" said Lord Minto on a visit) ; and tons of statuary, antique vases, Victorian bric-a-brac, Venetian mirrors and glittering chandeliers. Sir Josua Reymolds is present in "Venus and Cupid" ; Pinturicchio in "The Return of Ulysses to Penelope" ; Murillo in "The marriage of St. Catherine".

16. *The Indian Museum*—At the junction of the Chowringhee and Sudder Street is the massive stone edifice devoted to the purposes of the Indian Museum. It was erected from the designs of Walter B. Granville, the Government Architect at a cost of Rs. 1,40,000 in 1875. The first curator was Dr. John Ander-

son. The site was previously the old High School which was transferred to Darjeeling in 1863. The present building surrounds a quadrangular Court and has inner verandahs on all four sides. The Museum is one of the world's renowned Museums, the other four being the British Museum, the Vienna Museum, the one in the USA and the other in Paris.

This Museum is the offspring of the Asiatic Society of Bengal founded by Sir William Jones in 1784. As the collection of items increased, the Government of India donated a site at the corner of the Park Street and Chowringhee on which a building was erected. Later it proved inadequate and the collection owned by the Government of India was removed in 1856 to a building at no. 1, Hastings Street. With the increasing collection the necessity for a building was keenly felt. This led to the passing of the Indian Museum Act, 1866 and the erection of the present building. The Library section, however, remained in the custody of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The Museum has a frontage of 300 feet on the Chowringhee road and 270 feet on the Sudder Street. Among the exhibits are relics of the ancient civilisation of the Mohenjodaro and Harappa and a magnificent collection of Buddhist arts.

17. *The Nakhoda Mosque*—In the heart of a typically Indian bazar along the narrow Chitpur Road stands this specimen of Indo-Saracenic architecture—the Nakhoda Mosque. This is modelled on Akbar's tomb at Sikandra near Agra. Its prayer hall can accommodate 10,000 persons. A majestic dome set between two lofty minarets of 151 feet high each is surrounded by 25 smaller ones, surmounted by cupolas ranging from 100 to 117 feet. The foundation stone was laid on 11 September, 1926 and the mosque was built at a cost of Rs. 15 lakhs, borne by a wealthy community—the Cutchi Memons. Lofty arches of two imposing gateways, made of red sand-stone from Dholpur form the entrance, while lavish use of ornamental marble adds to the beauty of the interior.

18. *The Ochterlony Monument (Shahid Minar)*—On the western extremity of the Maidan stands this Ochterlony monument now called Shahid Minar facing Chowringhee. It is one of the tallest and architecturally the oldest memorial pillars in India. Its height is 165 feet and it was built in 1841 at a cost of

Rs. 40,000. The base is pure Egyptian, while the upper part of the column is taken from one in Syria. The Turkish dome is on the top. The foundations are artificial, made by driving 82 *sal* logs, each 20 feet long into the ground, their heads being 8 feet below the surface level. Over these a strong teak-wood frame was laid and over that 8 feet of solid masonry before the lowest step was begun. The principle of the staircase is peculiar; the inverse of each of the 218 steps "is jogged by means of pieces of the cast iron, laid in white lead into the end of those and above and the outer ends of the step are secured into the brick-work".

The monument was erected in memory of General Sir David Ochterlony, born on 17 February, 1758 at Boston, Massachusetts. Partly American he was Scot by origin. David reached Bengal in 1747 as a Cadet in the colonial Army of the E.I. Company. His military career extended over 40 years and his crowning achievement was the conquest of Nepal in 1814-16. His preference for the Muslims was responsible for the peculiar architectural form of his memorial.

19. *Parasnath Mandir*—This is the famous Jain temple situated in Badridas Temple Street in the north-east of the city. Of the 4 temples, the most important is the one dedicated to Shree Shree Sheetalnathji, the 10th of the 24 Jain reformers. It was erected in 1867 by Rai Budre Doss Bahadur who is shown in a white marble statue.

20. *The Presidency General Hospital*—This is now called *Seth Sukhlall Karnani Memorial Hospital*. This was built on the garden house of John Zacharias Kiernander, the first Protestant Missionary to come to Bengal and he later built the old Mission Church. On 25 April, 1768 the site was acquired. It is a handsome red-brick Victorian building with additional blocks and extensions to the original structure. It was in a small laboratory in this hospital that Surgeon Major (later Sir) Ronald Ross of the Indian Medical Service discovered in 1898 that the germs of malaria are conveyed by the *Anopheles* mosquito. His famous achievement won him the Nobel Prize for Physiology and Medicine in 1902. A marble tablet with an inscription to the right of the main entrance reads thus: "In the small laboratory 70 yards to the south-east of this gate Surgeon Major Ronald Ross, I.M.S. in 1898

discovered the manner in which malaria is conveyed by mosquitoes". Ross committed his epic discovery to verse :

This day relenting God  
 Hath placed within my hand  
 A wondrous thing ; and God  
 Be praised, at his command.  
 Seeking his secret deeds  
 With tears and toiling breath,  
 I find thy cunning seeds  
 O million-murdering death.  
 I know this little thing  
 A myriad men will save—  
 O Death, where is thy sting,  
 And Victory, O grave ?

But unhonoured and scarcely remembered remains Mahomed Bux, Ross's servant, who submitted his body as a guinea-pig to the bites of thousands of mosquitoes of several species. When he was not shivering with ague, he was searching among the sewers, the drains and tanks of Calcutta and catching mosquitoes, grey, brown, green and dappled-winged. Similarly when Ross discovered that birds too have malaria it was Mahomed Bux again who would search, snare and trap sparrows and crows.

21. *The Race Course*—This was constructed in 1819 and is controlled by the Royal Calcutta Turf Club. It has 3 tracks, two of which are for the Winter and Monsoon meetings, the 3rd being reserved for training. The outer or winter track measures 1 mile 5 furlongs in circumference. The course is flat throughout so as to afford a clear view from all points.

22. *The Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture*—The Institute is rooted in the teachings of Sri Ramkrishna (1836-86), who stressed, *inter alia*, the equal validity of all religions, the potential divinity of man and service to man as a way of worshipping God. His chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) carried far and wide these teachings, which constitute the core of India's philosophy, Vedanta. In 1897 he founded the Ramkrishna Mission to propagate these ideas. The Ramkrishna Math and the Ramkrishna Mission has 127 branches in India and abroad. One such branch is the Institute started in 1938 as an off-shoot of

Sri Ramkrishna's first birth-centenary celebration held in 1936. It has its magnificent building in south Calcutta, completed in 1960. It is the national culture that it caters to.

The Institute has a schedule of lectures, debates, elocution, seminars, symposia, study circles and the like. It runs a school of 13 languages for 4,000 students. An International House is attached to it—scholars and guests are accommodated here. Its library has 1,51,756 books and 368 Indian and foreign journals. Calcutta, Jadavpur and Burdwan Universities recognise the Institute as a centre for learning and research. The Institute has a Museum and Art Gallery.

23. *St. John's Church*—A part of the present churchyard served as the first Christian Burial ground from the foundation of the settlement of Calcutta in 1690 until 1767, when the South Park Street cemetery was opened. Thus it houses many relics of the earliest days of the city. The first that remains is the Charnock Mausoleum situated in the north-west corner. This is the oldest piece of masonry existing in Calcutta—this was erected by Job Charnock's son-in-law, Sir Charles Eyre. This represents a massive Octagonal structure surmounted by a small Octagon with a dome. Charnock was buried here on 10 January, 1693. The Saracenic architecture style of the Charnock mausoleum betrays the internment of an Englishman inside the tomb. But he was the first English 'Nabob', so the mausoleum fits in well with his habits and temperament. The Latin inscription reads thus "May the Lord remember the dead. Job Charnock, an English gentleman, and lately in this most worthy kingdom of Bengal, Agent of the English, has deposited the remains of his mortality beneath this marble, that they may rest in the hope of the blessed resurrection upto the coming of Christ, the judge; who, after he had wandered abroad on soil not his own, returned to the home of his eternity on the 10th January 1692 (1693)". Buried were also surgeon William Hamilton, Admiral Watson and "Begum" Johnson.

24. *St. Paul's Cathedral*—To the extreme south-east of the Maidan stands St. Paul's Cathedral, the first Episcopal Cathedral Church in the East and at present the Anglican Cathedral of Calcutta and the Metropolitan Church of India. It is of Indo-Gothic architecture and it measures 247 feet from east to west. The body of the edifice is 81 feet wide, while the transept ex-



tends 114 feet across. The steeple, 201 in height fell in the earthquake of 20th June, 1897, but was restored. The battlemented walls attain a height of 59 feet and were erected after the pattern of Norwich Cathedral. After a second earthquake in 1934 it was rebuilt after the model of the "Bell Harry" Tower of Canterbury Cathedral and dedicated in 1938. Most of the ornamentations—external and internal—are taken from the finest specimens of York Minister.

25. *The Tagore House*—This historic building situated at 6, Jorasanko Lane in Chitpur was the birthplace of Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), India's greatest poet and philosopher. A beautiful red sandstone building has been recently erected at a cost of Rs. 7 lakhs in his honour and is called Rabindra Bharati (1962), dedicated to the advancement of dance, drama, art and music. Rabindranath was awarded the Nobel prize in literature in 1913 for his book of poems, *Gitanjali* (song offering). He translated some of his Bengali poems into English and this English translation appeared in December 1912. Then came the London edition of *Gitanjali* with a foreward by W. B. Yeats and still later the magnificent French translation by Andre Gide. The impact on the west was swift and sudden—his poetry became famous in every land. The premises have been taken over by the Government of West Bengal. Rabindranath started in Santiniketan a University styled Viswa Bharati (1924). Its motto is, 'Yatra Visvam Bhabatyekneedam' (where the world is one).

26. *The Town Hall*—This two-storied structure built in the Grecian style with a Doric-pillared portico overlooks the West Bengal Legislative Hall. It was designed by Colonel John Garstin, who is remembered by Garstin Place. It cost Rs. 7 lakhs. The construction began in 1807 and was completed in 1815. The site was formerly the residence of Sir Edward Hyde, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on a monthly rental of Rs. 1,200. It was on the steps of the entrance that J. P. Norman, the Acting Chief Justice was stabbed on 20 September 1871. It was serving at the time as a temporary High Court. It was from the steps of the southern entrance that the proclamation of the accession of King George V was read by the Sheriff of Calcutta in 1910. The marble hall within measures 162 feet by 65. In 1895 Sir J. C. Bose gave a demonstration in which he transmitted wireless (Radio)

waves through a solid wall in the presence of the Lt. Governor before Marconi patented his invention of wireless in London on June 2, 1896. This displaced a heavy weight ringing well and exploded a mine in a closed room.

27. *The Writers' Buildings (the W. Bengal Secretariat)*—This building of Gothic architecture occupies the entire northern side of Dalhousie Square and accommodated most of the departments of the State Government of West Bengal. Above the central entrance is a row of ionic pillars and the National Coat of Arms. Along the roof are groups of statuary representing from west to east, Science, Agriculture, Commerce and Justice. Most people know it to be Writers' Buildings which is one of the oldest in Calcutta. The western end accommodated formerly St. Anne's Church till it was destroyed during the siege in 1756. The plot and the eastern extension was leased out in 1776 to Thomas Lyon for erecting quarters for the Writers and junior civil servants of the East India Company. It contained 19 sets of apartments, the monthly rental of each being fixed at 200 Arcot rupees. In this arrangement Thomas Lyon acted as the agent for Richard Barwell, the First Member of the Council. It continued for almost half a century. During this period *Writers' Buildings*—so called because of the residence of the writers—established reputation for extravagant parties, drunken orgies and lavish entertainments.

Writers and juniors used to consume on an average 4 bottles of wine per day, while the seniors consumed more. Macrabie, Francis's brother-in-law wrote of the latter's Calcutta residence : "A hundred and ten servants to wait upon a family of four people". With the withdrawal of the privilege of free accommodation the building was let out as offices and private dwellings. During the Lieutenant—Governorship of Sir Ashley Eden (1877-80) it was enlarged and improved and extensive blocks erected in the rear. The writers were made to vacate the apartments and stay elsewhere. It was made an office or Secretariat. It is more massive than grand. To Raw the Griffin (1828) described it thus :

There to the northward, in one even line the  
Writers' Buildings stand—nineteen in number  
Where young civilians prosper or decline  
As study spurs 'hem, or o'er books they clumber.

28. *The Zoological Gardens*—The idea of having a zoo was first mooted in 1867 by Dr. Fayrer. In 1893 it was pursued by C. L. Schwendler who was able to persuade Sir Richard Temple, the then Lt. Governor of Bengal (1874-77) with the support of the Asiatic Society and the Agri-Horticultural Society to have it. By the time the 'bustee' to the north-west of the Belvedere Palace was cleared and an area of 45 acres was granted as the site for the Animal Park or zoo. The Zoological Gardens were then laid out and on January 1, 1876 the zoo inaugurated by the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII). In May of that year it was opened to the public with Schwendler as the first Superintendent. And the organisational work was done by Rambrahma Sanyal.

(C) *A City of Palaces*—Thomas Twining was in the service of the John Company and he died on 25 December, 1861. His "Travels" preserved by his son Thomas, was published in 1893. At page 72 of the book there is a Caption "City of Palaces". He records his experience on 22 August, 1792. At page 73 he records as follows : "The situation of the elegant garden houses, as the villas on the left bank were called, surrounded by verdant grounds laid out in the English style, with the Ganges flowing before them, covered with boats and shipping struck me, as it does everybody who sees it for the first time, as singularly beautiful. These charming residences announced our approach to the modern capital of the East, and bespoke the wealth and luxury of its inhabitants. Turning suddenly to the north, at the end of this reach, the 'City of Palaces' with its lofty detached flat-roofed mansions and the masts of its innumerable shipping, appeared before us on the left bank of the Ganges, and on the same side. In the foreground of this beautiful perspective, were the extensive ramparts of Fort William".<sup>32</sup> Fancy Parkes has also called Calcutta the "City of Palaces" in her book "Wanderings of a pilgrim etc" (1822-28). Earlier Atkinson wrote in 1780 a poem "The City of Palaces" in which a lurid light was thrown on the sanitary conditions of the city :

Calcutta ! What was thy condition then ?  
An anxious, forced existence, and thy site

Embowering jungle, and noxious fen,  
 Fatal to many a bold aspiring wight :  
 On every side tall trees shut out the sight ;  
 And like the Upas, noisome vapours shed ;  
 Day blazed with heat intense. and murky night  
 Brought damps excessive, and a feverish bed ;  
 The revellers at eve were in the morning dead.<sup>33</sup>

However, Reverend Father James Long has questioned the propriety of the expression, "City of Palaces". He observed : "We know not when Calcutta *first* got the title, 'City of Palaces', though it was a mismomer in a place having no glass to its houses and few verandahs to shade off the heat ; in whose streets dead animals were to be seen petrifying and sometimes even human beings". And one endorses his opinion.<sup>34</sup>

#### IV. *Land and Water routes*

The routes over land and water are described below :

##### (a) *Streets and Squares/Roads and Lanes*

Kalikshetra had only two roads in olden times. One with an avenue of trees at its sides led eastwards from the zamindar's cutchery (collectorate) to a ghat at the Adiganga at its confluence with the Salt water lakes to the south of Sealdaha, then called Srigaldwipa. The second was wider than this and this was the immemorial Pilgrim Road to Kalighat which was designated by the British with the name of Broad Street. Besides, there were various paths and bye-paths that winded their ways as branches of the two main roads to carry men and goods to the markets of Govindpur, Sutanuti, Hatkhola and Burabazar, to Simlea and Algodan, to Baranagore and Fort Garden Reach. But they had no names.

However, after the British settlement its trade necessities compelled the construction of roads for the transport and storage of goods brought in by their brokers and agents. In the first place, branches of the "road leading to the eastward" were extended to the river-bank and to the Govindpur creek to form the Rope and

33. Ray, A. K., op. cit., 153—*Calcutta Review*, vol. 33 at 168.

34. Long, J.—*Calcutta and its neighbourhood* (Reprint, 1974) 71-2.

Respondentia walks. Thereafter roads to the Court House, Surman's Garden, Perrin's Garden, Peter Sukeas' House, the twin garden-houses of Omichand and Govindram Mitter and the Burial Ground were constructed. *Secondly*, the Circular Road made of the earth dug out of the Mahratta Ditch, became the broadest road in the town. *Thirdly*, the roads in the vicinity of the Fort and a small part of the road leading from the stone-paved ghat (*Pathuriaghat*) had been metalled with ballast-stone purchased from ship-captains. But other roads were *Kutchu*. *Fourthly*, upto 1867 only two of the roads of the town were stone-metalled. In that year 13 miles of macadamised road were metalled with stone and new layers of stone were laid on the stone-metalled thoroughfares. *Fifthly*, steam rolling machines were introduced for the first time in 1864, but they proved a failure. And they were replaced by the Paris Rollers of 14 tons weight. The total number of streets was 4 in 1706, 154 in 1756, 156 in 1850, 600 in 1876, 1616 in 1924, 1996 in 1948 and 2,027 in 1983. Calcutta in 1983 had 516.34 miles of streets. And the streets with bituminous pavement varying from  $\frac{1}{4}$ " to 3" thickness totalled 272.73 miles. The longest street is Acharya Jagadish Bose Road covering 4 miles. The widest street is Southern Avenue (now Dr. Meghnath Saha street) which has a uniform width of 150 feet.

### (b) *Ghats and Tanks*

(i) *Ghats*—The Ghats are the landing-places on the bank of the river. Thus *Prinsep's ghat* takes the lead in point of architectural beauty. It was erected to perpetuate the memory of James Prinsep. *Rajchunder Das's* ghat is named after the husband of "Rani Rashmoni" of Jaun Bazar Street and commonly called *Babu Ghat*. *Chandpal Ghat* was in existence in 1774 on the southern boundary of ancient Dihi Calcutta. It is named after one Chandranath Pal, who in the olden days kept a grocer's shop. Chandpal Ghat became the landing-place for the high officials of the Company, viz. the Governors-General, the Judges of the Supreme Court and others. *Bankshall Ghat* was the site on which stood the first dry dock in Calcutta, built by government in 1790 but removed in 1808. *Kashinath Babu Ghat* is named after Dewan Kashinath who became the Dewan of the zamindaries of Cossijorah Raja in Midnapore.

(ii) *Tanks*—Most of the tanks in Calcutta have been filled up. Still a few survive. There is *Shampooker*, which has given its name to ward 1. It is said to have derived its name from Sham Bysack. The existing tanks are the Laldighi (Dalhousie Square), the Goldighi (College Square), Hedua tank (Cornwallis Square) etc. By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the public tanks numbered 27, while the private ones 276. At present many of them have been filled up to accommodate more people.

### (C) *Waterways*

During the olden times Calcutta had all around marshes and the waterways consisted of cut canals. Thus Major William Tolly, an Engineer started excavating canal—Tolly's *Nullah*—in 1775 and completed it in 1776-77. His idea was to bring foodstuff and other merchandise from the environs of Calcutta and even from East Bengal and Assam by connecting these waterways with the riverine system. Major Tolly excavated this canal at his own cost. From Hastings (Kidderpore area) the Hooghly river was connected by the canal in an arc of 8 miles to Garia and then a further 9 miles to Samukpota that connected it with the fast running *Bidhyadhari* river. From Samukpota the Vidyadhari flowed south-east to the Matla creek (Canning) and the Sundarbans area. Tolly's Nullah of 17 miles is known as Adiganga. Because of this excavation many 'ganjas' and markets grew up along this canal and Major Tolly collected tolls from the boats using this canal. After his death his widow Anna Maria Tolly sold the right of toll-collection to John Wilkinson in 1784. In 1804 the then Government took over this right from Tolly's successors.

Later there was cut a Lake Channel through the Salt Lakes and the Balliaghat canal in 1800 and the Mahratta Ditch of East Calcutta excavated to convert it into a circular canal in 1830-33. The plan of the Circular canal was drawn up by Major Scholch. In 1910-11 the Krishnapur canal was excavated. This canal is 10 miles long. Another canal—20 miles long—runs southwards from Tolly's Nullah at Behala through Kewrapukur to Mograhat. The Railways now have taken over this task. Before this, one

had to travel by canoe or narrow 'shalti' of cocoanut or palm—tree trunk from Mograhat to Joynagar and thence to Calcutta.

The inland navigation on the Hooghly to and from Calcutta got a fillip from the inauguration of a steam vessel service. The first vessel to operate was the 'Diana' put into service in 1823. It had an 80 H.P. engine and a speed of 7 knots per hour on the Hooghly. Next came the River pilots. The Portuguese in 1530 first brought trained river-pilots when they sailed up the Hooghly from Diamond Harbour to Garden Reach. During 1645-1750 the Dutch had their own river-pilots. 'Rebecca' was the first 'East Indiaman' (vessel so called) to sail with an English river-pilot, Samuel Hacon. The East India Company got in 1869 the Nawab of Bengal's permission to have a River Pilot establishment. And George Heron was the first to pass out and complete the safe return trip, ferrying up and down the Hooghly and passing the sandheads. The Bengal Pilot Service was established after the British took over the complete control of the Indian Empire. The service was exclusively manned by English merchant men from the 1850s till 1930. The first Indian to join the service in 1931 was D. J. Daniel. Thereafter trained Indians came to man the service. In 1964 Calcutta Pilot Service has replaced the Bengal Pilot Service.<sup>35</sup>

#### *V. Transport*

Calcutta started with 1692 acres in 1706 and ended with 13,237 acres in 1901, the corresponding population being 30,000 in 1704 and 5,42,686 in 1901. In 1911 the population became 17,18,426. The number of streets and lanes was 4 in 1706 and increased to 328 miles in length in 1901. While the pucca buildings increased from 121 in 1742 to 1,114 in 1794, from 14,230 in 1821 to 38,574 in 1901, that is, by 178%, huts decreased from 53,289 to 49,007. On the other hand, the rate of population growth since 1751 was 52% in the next 70 years, i.e. upto 1821; about 110% in the succeeding 45 years, i.e., upto 1866; and about 52% in the following 35 years, i.e. upto 1901. A comparative study of the growth of population and increase of houses reveals the position in the two hundred years thus: "Although

the population in the old town area increased about 50 times in about two centuries, the number of houses increased only 11 times during the same period".<sup>36</sup>

Today Calcutta has 2125 roads, streets and lanes, the modes of transport in the 18th and 19th centuries were as follows :<sup>37</sup>

(a) *The Palki or palankeen*—For travelling inside the town as well as for long overlaid journeys, the *palki* or palanquin was mainly in use. This box—like conveyance could be seen in a few years back—it was used by *pardahnasin* ladies, the old and the infirm. Generally, the palanquins used in Calcutta was roomy, comfortable and gorgeous—it was richly gilt, painted upholstered and covered with silks and satins. Some had the poles partly mounted on silver so that a single *palki* cost 3 or 4 thousand rupees. But it was called a "long palanquin" by F. Balthazard Solvyn', the Belgian artist who came to Calcutta in the last decade of the 18th century and made a study of several varieties of palanquins from the common place to the luxious type. Surgeon Ives described the *palki* as "a covered machine with cushions in it, arched in the middle, to give it more room and air and carried on the shoulders of 4 or 6 men". The company authorities, however, considered the palanquins as "a piece of Eastern luxury" and banned its use by the junior clerks.

(i) *Types*—There were different kinds of palanquins. The most luxuriant type was called the *thalidar* and used by the Royalties and members of the aristocracy. They were covered with rich stuffs, emboidered in silk or gold extending over the bamboo-pole. The end of the pole had the covering, sometimes, of the head and tail of a tiger or some other animals. The bearers wore coloured jackets with red, blue and golden turbans. Cornwallis utilised the salons for the purposes of decoration. Such a special palanquin was used by the two royal hostages from Mysore and it cost about Rs. 6 or 7 thousand.

The *second* type was *Chowpal*. It had a very light bed or sofa cover with a bamboo arch over it—it was attended by servants carrying umbrellas. This was in demand in ceremonies such as marriage processions etc. The *third* type was 'long palanquin',

36. Ray, A. K., op. cit., 125-29; Ray, N. K., op. cit., 50, 54-7.

37. Roy, B. V.—Old Calcutta Cameos (1946), 91-8.



brought to India by the Europeans who used it. St. John's Church (1787) had special slopes for these palanquins. There was also a *fourth* type called '*Chair palanquins*', similar to the palanquin. Sedan chairs and chair palanquins were borne on men's shoulders and were of an open type. W. C. Sidney has described this type in his book, *England in the 18th century* thus : "(Sedan Chairs) which derived their names from the little town of that name in the Ardennes, were extensively patronised by the metropolitan habitues, beaux and belles alike when proceeding to the court drawing rooms (etc.). (They) were so constructed as to admit of the roof being pushed up in order to allow of their occupants standing upright in them, and closed tightly down when they had taken their seats".

(ii) *Relays by bearers*—The palki-bearers were generally of the same height, sturdy and strong-sinewed persons. If the height of any bearer was short of the average, heavy cotton pads were placed on the shoulders to make up the balance. In a long journey the rider had to plug his ears with cotton so as to keep away the choral singing of the bearers. The majority of the bearers were recruited from Orissa. An estimate in 1819 shows that the palki-bearers annually sent home no less than Rs. 3 lakhs.

The long overland journeys were undertaken with the help of "dawks" or relays by bearers, placed along the main roads. The difficulties were many, such as *kutchas* or bad roads, jungles infested with wild animals, depredations by robbers and the like. Details were given in a notice of the *Calcutta Gazettee* dated 14 April, 1786.

(iii) *The palki journey*—Solvyns has described the 'long palanquin' and its journey thus : "It is of good construction and has lanterns with 4 bearers and is preceded by *hircars* and *peadus*. The movements of the bearers are so easy that they are scarcely felt by the person in the palanquin. There are changes of bearers as there are of post-horses in Europe. Some of these palanquins were made at a price of 8 to 12 hundred pounds, but the ordinary cost is no more than 20 to 40 pounds".

(iv) *Fares*—In 1839 there were, in Calcutta and its suburbs, 2875 palkis and 11,500 bearers. The fare for the journey from Calcutta to Benaras was 500 sicca rupees ; from Calcutta to Patna

400 ; and from Calcutta to any intermediate stations "one rupee two annas per coss". Travelling by *dawkpalki* continued upto the 18th century, but the cost was prohibitive for people of limited means. Therefore, they used bullock-carts with a thatch or covering of split bamboos and cloth with a layer of straw inside to serve as a "shock-absorber" against the jerks and jolts caused by bad roads.

(b) *Animals and carts*—Bullock carts antedated the palanquins. And they were in use for travellers as well as for merchandise. Camels and elephants were also in use as modes of conveyance. Animals as media of transport and travel, used to move or take rest along the streets of old Calcutta. And the Daniells have left pictures of them. Various kinds of bullockcarts were used—*Hackery* ; *Rahoo* ; and *Rath*. The *first* was made of wood and used for carrying merchandise. The *second* was of light body and it consisted of only a pole with a traverse of timber and two wheels drawn by a pair of oxen. The third (a chariot kind) was a type of 4—wheeled carriage—it was generally roomy and ornamented with gratings of very thin and coloured bamboos. Usually a pair of sturdy oxen\*used to draw this. Their nose and horns had rings of gold and silver fastened to these with the hoofs and tail painted red.

(c) *Faster means of travel*—By the middle of the 19th century attempts were made to adopt faster means of travel, e.g. 'bullock-trains' etc. In 1850 a wealthy Indian, name Tunti Mull, in collaboration with some Europeans started horse—carriage "dawks" from Calcutta to Cawnpore under the name of "Inland Transit Co" with accommodation for 4 passengers in each to run between Benaras, Meerut, Agra and Delhi. The speed was 7 miles per hour, and the fare one anna per mile. After this came railway trains—the first railway (the East Indian line) was opened in 1855 and at first it ran only from Calcutta to RaneeGUNGE, a distance of 120 miles.

(d) *Royal Mail*—With the opening of the new roads and the improvements made in the old roads, both within and outside in the town, horse-drawn carriages began to be widely used. As a result the old palanquins and like dropped into disuse. An advertisement in the *Calcutta Gazette* of 1815 reveals that one J. Bacon, the proprietor of the "Royal Mail" service had started

with the government sanction, "an establishment of Royal Mail coaches between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour with relays of horses at every 8 miles on the road in performing the distance of 32 miles in four hours." It was announced that the Mail would carry 4 inside and 6 outside passengers. Another advertisement by J. Bacon announced a similar service from Calcutta to Barrackpore, carrying 6 inside and 8 outside passengers, "to run from the Mail Office on the west side of Tank Square (Dalhousie Square), opposite M/s. Greenway and Company's library every evening at half past 5 o' clock, and Barrackpore every morning at the same hour".

(e) *Other conveyances*—Besides Sedan chairs, old Calcutta had the *tonjon* i.e. a chair with movable hood. This was popular at one time and used by lady William Bentinck during her stay in India, when her husband was the Governor-General from 1828 to 1835. Prior to the sack of Calcutta (1756) there were few carriages in the settlement. But with the spread of the town and the making of new roads, the number of conveyances increased. M. L. Grandpre, the French traveller visited Calcutta in 1789 and wrote "Voyage in the Indian ocean and to Bengal undertaken in 1781-90". In it he said that Calcutta, exclusive of palanquin "abounds with all sorts of carriages, chariots, britzskas and phaetons which occasion in the evening as great a bustle as in one of the principal towns of Europe. There are also a great number of saddle horses, some of the Persian breed of exquisite beauty, but not Arabians, except a small sort called *Pooni*, which are very much in vogue for phaetons". It appears from an article in the *Calcutta Review* of 1844 that 10 varieties of carriages could be seen in the town, namely, britzskas, barouches, landaulets, chariots, phaetons, buggies, planquins, pulki-gharries, brownberries and crahanchys.<sup>38</sup>

(4) *Horse-carriages*—The horse-drawn vehicles commonly seen in old Calcutta were buggies, gigs, curricles, postchaises etc. But these were mostly seen for show and on such occasions as evening drives or social visits. There were carriages drawn by 4 or 8 horses, gorgeously caparisoned with syces dressed in res-

plended uniforms. The carriages had many coloured and opulent designs. Carriages and horses were regularly hired by livery stable-keepers, most of whom carried on their business in the Cossaitollah area (Bentinck Street locality). One of the earliest livery stable-keepers was Charles Meredith and a street bore his name. The rates of hire were advertisement in the *Calcutta Gazette* dated March 26, 1801 thus :—a coach and four per day—sicca Rs. 24 and for the month, sicca Rs. 300; a chariot and pair per day and per month—sicca the Rs. 16 and Rs. 200. It was Rs. 10/- within 5 miles for a coach and pair. For shopping—the rate was sicca rupees eight for the 1st hour, rupees 12, if within 2 hours.

(g) *Tramways*—Trams for communication within the city were first introduced on February 24, 1873. These public trams were horse-drawn. In 1873 the Government laid tracks from Sealdah to Armenian ghat. They were called *tram trains*, meant to carry the merchandise of the suburban traders for storage in Sovabazar and on Strand Road. Each car was drawn by a pair of stout Australian Walers. The horses would often stop for a cool draught from the iron water-reservoirs on the wayside. The tramway started at Sealdah and ran along Baithakkhana, Bowbazar and Dalhousie Square and thence along Strand Road to the terminus at Armenian Ghat. It carried only passengers upto November 20, 1873 at a monthly loss of Rs. 500. It was then closed down. 5 years later in 1878 schemes for a complete system of tramways were prepared. In October 1877 an agreement was concluded between the Corporation and the Calcutta Tramways Co. Ltd. The first tram car ran on November 1, 1880 on the Sealdah-Bowbazar tracks. The cars were drawn by horses. Casualties were heavy since the horses had been put to severe strain of the Calcutta heat. In May 1882 the steam engine was introduced in Chowringhee. After 11 months of irregular running the engines were withdrawn. In 1902 electricity was introduced and in 3 years in all the routes. The first electric tramcar ran from Esplanade to Kidderpore. Suburban electric trams were introduced in Howrah in 1902 and in Behala on May 2, 1908.

(h) *Mechanical appliances*—Bicycles made their first appearance on the Calcutta Streets in 1889. Motors came in 1896 and taxis in 1906. Public buses like the first tram car were drawn by horses. The first horse-drawn buses plied in 1830. Motor buses

came into use in 1922. Rickshaws were invented in Japan at the end of the 18th century by a European Missionary. They derive their name from the Japanese expression '*Ji Riki Shaw*' which literally means "vehicle propelled by man". The first rickshaws appeared in India around 1880, on the imperial avenues of Simla, the summer capital of the British Indian Empire. Some 20 years later a few of these vehicles arrived in Calcutta by Chinese traders who used them to transport goods.<sup>39</sup>

In rainy seasons these are indispensable for the water-logged streets of Calcutta. Besides, there is a whole range of tempos, lorries and vans. To these are added the vehicles of old, such as hand carts and bullock carts for conveyance of goods.

(i) *Waterways*—In olden times the only feasible method other than overland journeys was by means of boats along the great waterways of the country. This was replete with risks and dangers, chiefly owing to the attacks of pirates or dacoits. Solvyns has left us a graphic description of a variety of boats, viz, the *dinghee*, the *budgerow*, the *pinance*, the *Bhowalia* and the *Mayur-pankhee*. A journey by budgerow was pleasant, though its movement was slower. The fastest moving boat was the Bhowalia with its light body. There is one instance of such a boat performing its voyage from Lucknow to Calcutta in 8 days. An idea of charges for boat-travel may be had from a notice published in the *Calcutta Gazette* dated April 21, 1785, viz,

For a budgerow of	8 dandies, per day—	sicca rupees	2/- .
"	10 " " — " "		2. 8 :
For a Wallock of	4 dandies, per month	" "	22/- .

It took 75 days to go to Benares, 37½ days to go to Dacca and 25 days to go to Murshidabad.

## CHAPTER X

### THE CLASSES AND THE MASSES

Social history might be defined negatively as the history of a people with the politics left out. It is perhaps difficult to leave out the politics from the history of any people. The social scene grows out of economic conditions, to much the same extent that political events in their turn grow out of social conditions. Without social history, economic history is barren and political history is unintelligible. But social history does not merely provide the required link between economic and political history. It has also its own positive value and peculiar concern. Its scope may be defined as the daily life of the inhabitants of the land in the past ages : this includes the human as well as the economic relation of different classes to one another, the character of family and household life, the conditions of labour and of leisure, the attitude of men to nature, the culture of each age as it arose out of these general conditions of life and took ever-changing forms in religion, literature and music, architecture, learning and thought.

—G. M. Trevelyan : *English Social History* (E.L.B.S. 1962)  
“Introduction”, vii.

Calcutta started in its development with three sectors—(1) the white town, (2) the brown town ; (3) the black town, as reported already. The first was predominantly an English town developed around the Tank Square (Dalhousie Square) and Chowringhee areas in Dihi Kalkatah. The latter extended from Nimtollah ghat to Babu ghat and is now covered by Burrabazar, Clive Street and Dalhousie Square. Its southern boundary was a creek or *Khal*, which originating in the marshes of the Salt Lakes ran along Beliaghata Road, Creek Row, Wellington Square and Hastings Street and fell into the Hooghly. And the mouth of the river extended from Koila ghat to Chandpal Ghat. The third was represented by the northern portion of the city—it extended from Chitpur in the north to Jora Bagan ghat, a little below Nimtollah ghat. In between these two stood the second town which was inhabited by the non-European foreigners, such as the Armenians, Eurasians, Chinese, Abyssinians, Iranians and the like. This

tripartite division reveals the social stratification of in-groups and out-groups, the trinity of power, property and status as well as the social class and caste. And these are dealt with below.

### I. *Social groups*

Aristotle has rightly observed that man is a social animal. He further adds that a man incapable of living without society is "either a beast or a god". But the man who can live exclusively for the State, if he exists, is either a tyrant or a slave. Man's life is thus a group life. And by group is meant a collection of human beings who are brought into social relationships with one another. Thus a group involves reciprocity between its members. The classification of groups may be based on size, some quality of group interaction, some quality of group interest, the degree of organisation or some combination of these. The East India Company was organised on trade and ethnic interests. In the process of socialisation man learns to divide people into the "we" and the "they". The common interests of the Company and the attitude of their employees supporting the interests were reflected in the group distinctions made by them. The group with which the Company's servants identified themselves were their "ingroups" by virtue of their likeness or "consciousness of kind".<sup>1</sup> Hence, the subjective attitudes of the employees reveal their in-group membership. It is thus evident that the out-group was defined by the employees in relation to the in-group, usually expressed in the contrast between "we" and "they"—"we" denoting the Englishmen and "they" the Indians, usually called the 'natives'. It may be noted that in-group attitudes are always marked by sympathy for and attachment to, the other members of the group i.e., the Englishmen. On the other hand, out-group attitudes are always accompanied by a sense of difference and frequently by some degree of antagonism. The coinage of such terms as 'Native', 'Black' shows this animosity.

The particular feeling associated with this inherent antagonism is called "griffinage". The word "griffin" means "one newly arrived in India, and unaccustomed to Indian ways and peculiarities ; a Johnny New come."<sup>2</sup> An old writer of 1808 describes the

characteristic thus : "On his (griff officer) arrival in India, it is a natural bias which prompts him to feel a sensation of *repugnance*, nay, little short of *abhorence*, to the natives in general. Everything a native does is executed exactly contrary to European ideas. Many sensible persons could not conquer their aversion to touch the skin of a native 'Blackey'; 'black fellows' and 'black scoundrels' are the opprobrious terms generally used in speaking of them".<sup>3</sup> The Company's servants and Englishmen generally were imbued with this "griffinage". The term "griffin" is defined in Hamlyn's Encyclopaedic World Dictionary (1972 at p. 701) as "(in India and the East) a new-comer". Hence, "griffinage" means the bias associated with a stranger.

## II. *The pyramid of power*

Power, property and status are woven into a trinity, a single hierarchy. This trinity is invested with authority, namely the authority of the government. Authority means the power to command obedience. Property conveys both power and status, derived from its right to dispose of things. And status confers power, that in its turn confers status. These attributes are interdependent so that they easily pass from one into another. Nevertheless, such a distinction is necessary to understand the social change. By social power is meant the capacity in any relationship to command the service or the compliance of others. And this depends to some extent, on the possession of means or resources; but it also depends on other conditions. One of the means is property, which is a large category. The power derived from property varies according to the type of prevailing culture with its over-all myth of authority. Thus property under the Hindu Caste system does not convey so much power as it does in a capitalist society. The power wielded by Gandhi is not a function of the ownership of property. Power of itself is not authority. Similar is the case with status. A man without important prior status may gain the highest authority; on the other hand, after his gain his status may be lower than that accorded to others of less authority. Now authority means the established *right*, within any social order, to determine policies, to pronounce judgements on relevant issues and



to settle controversies. Power alone has no legitimacy, no mandate, no office. Even the most ruthless tyrant gets nowhere, unless he can clothe himself with authority. Status, power and property are themselves all socially determined, not given by nature. The power-system is self-adjusting. The lines of power are responsive to the *mores* of the society. The power of the individual is safeguarded by the power of his groups. Men and groups become accommodated to their respective limits within which they exercise their control.<sup>4</sup>

The resultant of these operations is the pyramid of power. It is man's mortal fear of the dissolution of social order that keeps it going. In other words, the ground underneath is man's instinct for society. One has to remember that power is never a mere subordination of the many to the one. It is always a hierarchy. It implies a class-structure. The growth of political power thus necessitates changes in social structure. And this consists in the establishment or re-formation of social classes in terms of relative dominance and subjection. The origins of this class-structure are, of course, inherent in the inequality of human conditions. There are inner and outer circles of kinship.<sup>5</sup> The employees of the E.I. Company illustrate this. Thus there had always been the Agent and Council, the Governor and Council. Besides, there was a hierarchy of officers in the Company's factions thus : Writer : Factor ; Junior Merchant ; Senior Merchant (or Chief Agent) ; Councillor : President and Governor. There were also Chaplains, Surgeons and Masters.<sup>6</sup> And the socio-political order to which men cling is presented to them as a graduated order. Power and status combine in such a way that they are seen organised by rank and station. The way men feel about it may be described in the words of Ulysses thus :

..... Oh, when degree is shak'd

Which is the ladder to all high designs,

The enterprise is sick ! How could *Communities*

.....

But by degree, stand in authentic place ?

Take but degree away, untune that string,

4. MacIver, R. M.—The web of Government, 32-3, 98.

5. MacIver, R. M.—The Modern State (Reprint, 1964), 47-8.

6. Long, J.—Unpublished Records of the govt. (ed), M. P. Saha (2nd edn), 1973.

And, hark, what discord follows ! Each thing meets  
In mere oppugnancy.<sup>7</sup>

### III. *The Company as the Community*

Ulysses uses the word 'community' in his speech. It is necessary to get an idea as to what it means. And this necessitates a discussion of the state, society, association, institution and ultimately community.

(a) *The State and Society*—The nation has a double aspect as seen from three view-points. *First*, there is the viewpoint of purpose or function. When *legally* organised it becomes a single legal association and acts in terms of its association that is 'constitution' for the purpose of enforcing a permanent system of law and order. But *socially* organised, the nation acts for a variety of purposes, viz, religions, moral, intellectual, aesthetic, economic, recreational. The *second* viewpoint is that of organisation or structure. Organised *legally*, the members of the nation belong to one organisation only, the State, while socially organised, the members belong to many organisations. The *third* viewpoint relates to method. The state employs the method of coercion, but society uses the method of voluntary action and the process of persuasion.<sup>8</sup>

#### (b) *Association, community and institution*

All social forms may be classified as areas of society, i.e. communities. An association established within society for the achievement of a conscious and limited purpose is called an 'association'. And 'institutions' are the recognised modes in accordance with which communities and associations regulate their activities. The association denotes a group of persons or members who are associated and organised into a unity of will for a common end. On the other hand, the institution does not directly refer to persons at all, but to the form of order along which their activities are related and directed. Hence, institutions may be established by the community as well as by associations and customs are included in the former class. And the State, in this context, may be either an association or an institutional system. The social

forms are (1) *Associations*, when partial unities are involved, e.g. family, church, class, business firm ; (2) *Communities*, when integral unities are involved, e.g. country, city, nation ; and (3) *Institutions* when modes or means are involved, e.g. inheritance, the class distinctions.<sup>9</sup>

(c) *Society and community*—Men as social beings create and recreate an organisation to guide and control their behaviour in myriad ways. And this organisation, namely, society, liberates and limits the men's activities, sets up standards for them to follow and maintain. Society is thus the web of relationships. In other words, "Society is (complex) system of usages and procedures, of authority and mutual aid, of many groupings and divisions, of controls of human behaviour and of liberties".<sup>10</sup> The social relationship involves both likeness and difference in the beings whom it relates. So is it with society in its various manifestations.

A community is an area of social living marked by some degree of *social coherence*. It has two bases—(i) locality and (ii) community sentiment. A community always occupies a territorial area. Even a nomad community, a band of gypsies, for example, has a local, though changing, habitation. The conception of community underscores the relation between social coherence and the geographical area. Some modifications are introduced in this relation by civilisation. Still "the basic character of locality as a social classifier has never been transcended".<sup>11</sup> *Secondly*, locality, though a necessary condition is not sufficient to create a community. If people in a local area lack social coherence, they cannot form a community. One has to remember that a community is an area of common living. And this includes its awareness of sharing a way of life and the common earth.<sup>12</sup>

In this context, it may be said that the nation, the great community, is not identical with the State. We do not live in States, but in communities. States are not integral things like communities. Everywhere men weave a web of relationships with their fellows as they buy and sell, as they worship, as they rejoice and mourn. And this greater web of relationships is society and

a community is a delimited area of society. In the latter, the community develops the law behind law—the multisanctioned law that existed before governments began and the law of government cannot supersede this law. Without the prior laws of the community all the laws of the state would be empty formulas. And custom as the first “king of men” still rules. The *mores* still prescribe. Manners and modes still flourish. The laws made by governments cannot rescind them.<sup>14</sup>

(d) *Association and community*—An association is not a community, but an organisation within a community. There are two points of distinction between them. *First*, community is more than any specific organisations rising within it. This can be seen by contrasting the business, church or club with the village, city or nation. The former can be explained in terms of the particular interest around which they are organised. But no definite answer can be given where communities exist. *Secondly*, the association is organised for particular purposes, for the pursuit of specific interests. Membership in an association has a limited significance. An individual may belong to many associations. In this context, Maclver and Page observe: “Associations may become communities, at least, temporarily. There are the examples of 17th century trading company outposts which became communities in every respect”.<sup>15</sup> In other words, the East India company that received its first Charter on 31 December, 1600 was an association at first. But when it got an ‘outpost’ it became a community.

(e) *The Company personnel's community sentiment*—When human beings are thrown together, separated in whole or part from the world outside so that they are to live their lives in one another's company, it is their social impulses that bring them into communities. In other words, *community sentiment* is formed. In the words of Aiken about the passengers on shipboard: “The extra-ordinary feeling of kinship, of unity, of a solidarity for closer and more binding than that of nations or cities or villages, was swiftly uniting them; the ship was making them a community”.<sup>15</sup> Community sentiment consists of three elements (i) We-feeling;

(ii) Role-feeling ; (iii) Dependency-feeling. The first consists in the collective participation in an indivisible unity. This leads men to identify themselves with others. This "We"-sentiment is found wherever men have a common interest—it is revealed more clearly in the territorial community. The interest of an individual is merged in the larger interest of the group so that the community to him is "home of his home and flesh of his flesh". The second ingredient is the sense of place of station in which he has to play a role. This feeling of subordination to the whole on the part of the individual is fostered by training and habituation. And the third element involves both a *physical* dependence, since his material wants are satisfied within it, and a *psychological* dependence, because the community is the greater "home" that sustains him. The community is a refuge from the solitude and fears that accompany the individual isolation of the Company's servants. However, the three elements of identification, of role and dependency are manifested in different degrees and in different combinations within man's communities.<sup>16</sup>

#### IV. *Caste, class and race*

(a) *Class*—The various occupations make up *vertical* divisions of the community, while the divisions reflecting the principle of social class are the *horizontal* strata, always a graded order. Wherever social intercourse is limited by considerations of status, by distinctions of "higher" and "lower", there *social* class exists. A *social class* may thus be defined as "any portion of a community marked off from the rest by social status". A system of structure of social classes involves three things, viz., (i) a hierarchy of status groups ; (ii) the recognition of the superior-inferior stratification, and finally, (iii) some degree of permanency of the structure. Status is the social position that determines for its possessor a degree of respect, prestige and influence. There is an intimate relation between social class and type of occupation. But the two are not identical, since class distinctions basically rest not on function but on status. And status may be based upon differences of birth, wealth, occupation, political power, race, or in case of traditional China, intellectual attainment.

The sentiment that characterises the relations of men towards the members of their own and other classes is called feeling. This establishes what is called "social distance"—an essential feature of class distinction. "Social distance" as applied to class attitudes is not identical with personal liking or from their belonging to groups rated as superior or inferior in status.<sup>17</sup> Class feeling differs from community sentiment. Whereas the latter admits of no grades, the former is rooted in the principle of hierarchy. Class sentiment is a sentiment of disparity. It unites the "superior" against the "inferior". There are two types of class sentiment—corporate class consciousness and competitive class feeling. The former is a sentiment uniting a whole group that shares a similar status. But there is a more personal form that determines the conduct of individuals towards one another without any express recognition of the whole groups to which they belong. When a man's lot in life is fixed by anterior social conditions, he more readily identifies himself with the whole group of his fellows subject to the same conditions. This is illustrated by the 'touchables' and the 'untouchables' in Hindu society. If the old mores break as in industrialisation and urbanisation, then this class consciousness becomes a powerful engine of social change. In a mobile system, class sentiment may become stronger than among groups of rigidly determined status. The class system is no longer tier above tier, but a continuous incline. And class struggle tends to take the form of the striving of individuals and families to maintain their place and still more to "rise in the world". It becomes competitive. The emergent phenomenon is described by Veblen as marked by the principles of emulation, competition and conspicuous display.<sup>18</sup>

#### (b) *Caste*

When status is fixed by birth as in the traditional Indian caste system, the class structure tends to be compact and rigidly stratified at the same time. Political power and wealth in the form of land-control are closely bound up with birth as marks of status. So long as birth defines status, vertical social mobility

17. Sorokin, P.—*Social Mobility* (1927), chap. I.

18. Veblen, T.—*The theory of Leisure Class* (1922), chap. IV.

is impossible. The Hindu Caste system has been defined by the Indian Statutory Commission thus : "Every Hindu necessarily belongs to the caste of his parents and in that caste he inevitably remains. No accumulation of wealth and no exercise of talents can alter his caste status : and marriage outside his caste is prohibited or severely discouraged".<sup>19</sup> With the multitudinous caste compartments in the Hindu system the higher caste groups—at the top the Brahman and next in order the Kshatriya and Vaisya—are thought of as beings of different clay from the low caste group of the Sudras, while further below are the "outcastes" or untouchables", whose presence is considered a defilement to the rest. Caste signifies the enhancement and transformation of "social distance" into a religious or more strictly, a magical principle. In the Hindu system the religious doctrine permits caste mobility for the individual but in a reincarnated life. And it is the magical part of the doctrine that makes the shadow of an "untouchable" or even his unseen presence in the vicinity a source of pollution, that forbids him to enter the same temples as the higher castes.

### (c) *Race*

The term 'race' signifies a biological category. It refers to human stocks that are *genetically* distinguished, to major human types that owe their differences from one another, especially their physiological differences, to a remote separation of ancestry. Such differences often arise from exposure of groups to distinctive environments and from participation in distinctive cultures. And wherever large groups distinguished by any differences of physical features lay claim to superior status or superior power or superior quality, they are apt to develop a *consciousness* of race. Anthropological investigation, however, shows that it is generally, if not always, a false consciousness. And the consciousness of race is a sociological phenomenon, one that has an impact on social relationships. So, the sociologist does not deal with races, but with race-conscious groups. But ethnic groups, much more than great associations and more often than classes (though not castes), are

in-groups and they maintain cleavages between the "they" and the "we" in social life. There is some feeling of warmth towards the "we" which is withheld from the "they".<sup>20</sup>

## V. *The Calcuttans*

(a) *People*—"Calcutta is a big city", observes H. Hobbs, "for its age (is) more full of history, political and social, than any other comparatively new settlement and certainly more widely known. Many speak badly of it, but Europeans, who remain, enjoy good health and are more cheerful than they could be in their native land".<sup>21</sup> It is a fact according to him that those who have passed through the Straits of Bab'l Mandeb (The Gate of Sorrow) to the Land of Regrets—the land where the British had no home and left no memory—and spent their first summer in Calcutta can imagine that the early settlers had to undergo great hardships. But the conditions in their native land were no better than those in Calcutta. To the poor man especially there was less of the tyranny of the squire and the person, though the medical services were not much improved at the time. In this context wrote Tom Raw in 1825 thus :

And further on, as glides the *dinghy* through  
The Hooghly's winding stream, appears Fort William.  
A well-constructed fort with nought to do  
But to receive new regiments and to grill'er  
(If they arrived in May or June—to kill'em .

The people of Calcutta spoke of themselves as "The inhabitants" and the town as "The Settlement". Subsequently, the settlement became a city, then a capital and thereafter a metropolis. The inhabitants used to live in three towns, known as the white town, the brown town and the black town. Naturally the people in these areas were different. The white people were the Britishers, who were race-conscious. The Brown people were the foreigners like the Europeans, Armenians, the Chinese, the Persians etc. And the Black people were the natives . ch as the boatmen, trades-



men, palanquin-bearers, banians, gomastas and the like. These people—white, brown and black—lived in a two-fold capacity. They were separate from each other and as such each formed a separate community different from the other two. This was un-written *apartheid* in operation as if under a Group Areas Act as in South Africa. *Secondly*, they had also a wider perspective as an “inhabitant” of Calcutta or a ‘*Calcuttān*’. The name, ‘Calcuttan’ denotes that the inhabitants are the members of a wider society beyond the group communities. In other words, the people were first members of group communities and then of the Calcutta society. In a plural and complex society the state alone can establish an effective and basic order. On the one hand, its law is binding on all who live within a geographical area; on the other hand, it possesses the ultimate right of enforcement. Order is always based on some principle of justice. But the attainment of justice is a difficult task. It cannot be secured by the simple “rule of law”, which as Anatole France remarked, “in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep in the streets and to beg bread”.<sup>22</sup> One of the fundamentals of any order is a system of property rights, which are not given by “nature”, but determined by authority. And the State can maintain order by involving itself in the task of securing justice, namely, “to give every man his own” (*Suum cuique tribuere*). It alone has jurisdiction over all the members of a community—it alone can represent the interests common to all of them as against the interests which divide them.<sup>23</sup>

Because of this cohesion Calcutta can claim four Nobel Laureates out of seven associated with India. The fifth one is Hargobind Khorana (b. January 9, 1922). He was born in Raipur, Punjab (India), now in Pakistan. He got his Ph.D. in Chemistry in 1948 from the University of Liverpool where he had been studying on a Govt. of India Fellowship. Thereafter he joined the University of Wisconsin in 1960 and succeeded in synthesizing the first wholly artificial gene. He is a naturalised citizen of the U.S.A., who got the Nobel prize in Physiology and Medicine in 1968 along with R. W. Holly and M. W. Nirenberg. The sixth

22. Catlin, G. E. G.—A study of the principles of politics (1930), chap VII.

23. MacIver/Page, *op. cit.*, 458-60.

Nobel Laureate in Physics is Chandra Sekhar Subrahmanyan (b. October 19, 1910) born in Lahore (Pakistan). He is the nephew of Raman, the 1930 Nobel Laureate in Physics. Chandra Sekhar was a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge during 1936-37 and Professor of Physics at the Chicago university during 1944-46. He is an American citizen, who got the Nobel prize in 1983 for his studies of the structure and evolution of stars. The seventh Nobel Laureate in Peace in 1989 is Dalai Lama (b. 1935) whose real name is Tenzin Gyatso. He is the ruler and spiritual leader of Tibet now exiled in India since the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese in 1959. He has been awarded the prize because "the Dalai Lama has in his struggle for the liberation of Tibet, consistently opposed the use of violence".

The first Calcuttan to get the Nobel prize in Physiology and Medicine in 1902 was Sir Ronald Ross (b. May 13, 1857—d. September 16, 1932). He was born in Almora, India. He joined the Indian Medical Service and served with the Indian Army during 1881-94 in Madras and Burma. He carried out his research in a small laboratory in the Presidency General Hospital, now called the SSKM Hospital, Calcutta. In 1897 he discovered the malarial parasite in the gastro-intestinal tract of the *Anopheles* mosquito. A year later, he discovered that a parasite in the blood of birds closely resembled the malarial parasite of the humans. For this discovery he was awarded the Nobel prize. He was also a poet and his poem on the *Anopheles* mosquito has already been recorded. The second Nobel Laureate was Rabindranath Tagore (b. May 7, 1861—d. August 7, 1941), who got the prize in Literature in 1913 for the English version of his collection of Bengali poems named *Gitanjali* (*song offering*). He was born in Calcutta and a prolific writer of poems, novels, plays, and essays. He was a gifted musical composer. In 1924 he inaugurated the Visva Bharati University. The National Anthems of India and Bangladesh—*Jana Gana Mana* and *Amar Sonar Bangla*—are his compositions.

In 1980 Sir Chandra Sekhara Venkata Raman (b. November 8, 1888—d. November 21, 1970) got the Nobel prize in Physics for his work on the scattering of light and for the discovery of the effect named after him. He was born in Tiruchirapally, India. He worked for 10 years in the Finance department and joined the Indian Association for the cultivation of Science, Cal-

cutta as Professor of Physics and remained there from 1917 to 1933. He studied the scattering of light in 1928 in various substances and found that with the transmission of light of one frequency through a medium, other frequencies characteristic of the material were added. These so-called, "Raman frequencies" are equal to the infrared frequencies for the material and are caused by the exchange of energy between the light and the material. This discovery provided much valuable information on molecular rotation and particularly vibration and thus on the shape and symmetry of the molecules themselves. His research was carried out at the old laboratory of the Association at Calcutta. The fourth Nobel Laureate is Mother Teresa (b. August 10, 1910), who was born at Skopji, Yugoslavia. Her family is from an Albanian peasant stock. On November 28, 1928 she was sent to Loreto Abbey near Dublin, Ireland and thence to India to begin her novitiate in Darjeeling, Bengal. She taught geography at St. Mary's High School in Calcutta from 1929 to 1948. On September 10, 1946 she asked for permission to live alone outside the cloister and to work in Calcutta slums. And this was granted. On August 8, 1948 she laid aside the Loreto habit and clothed herself in simple white *sari* with blue border and a cross on the shoulder. She got nursing training from Patna and started living with the little-sisters of the poor in Calcutta. In 1962 she became a naturalised citizen of India. Her *Nirmala Sishu Bhavan* (Orphanage) houses hundreds of unwanted and abandoned children. Her *Nirmal Hriday* and *Prem Dan* shelter dying persons left neglected on roadsides. She got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979.<sup>21</sup>

(b) *Types and sub-types in social evolution*

It has already been noted that three areas were allotted to three broad types of people—white, brown and black. They formed classes as well. But the first type was class-conscious, the second race-conscious, while the third caste-conscious. Moreover, each type had sub-types as well. The first type was homogeneous, while two other types heterogeneous. The former may be treated as a compound, whereas the latter two as mixtures. On

the other hand the first two depended on the church as a cultural association. And the church postulates a two-fold relationship or communion—a communion of man with a non-human power and a derivative communion of man with man. The third type is based on religion. Thus the effect of religion is manifest in the three in the shape of social restraint. The first two were concerned with means and were utilitarian, while they also promoted ends and became cultural at the same time. The third type was primarily cultural.

In this context, it is necessary to know the main line of social evolution, covering all the types and sub-types. The process started from communal custom and came to differentiated association. One has to remember that before institutions came attitudes and interests. Simple societies were ruled by the all—pervading code of custom. Then special interests became important. The men or groups tended to distinguish the rights and privileges of their functions from the general customary code, to *institutionalise* them. And the formation of institutions preceded by a very long interval that of associations. The great politico-religious system revealed the internal disharmonies of its enforced unity. As a result the associations of the State and of the church came into existence. The process of evolution may be indicated thus : (1) Communal customs ; (2) Differentiated communal institutions ; and (3) Differentiated associations. The first fuses political-economic, familial, religious and cultural usage while the second shows the forms of their procedures. And the third shows the State, the economic corporation, the family, the church, the school etc. It may be noted that the first two types—white and brown—revealed the economic corporation and the church respectively. While the first showed also the State, the second primarily the family, the school etc. But the latter were of secondary importance in the former.

The Armenians were among the early settlers in Calcutta. They had been settled in Chinsurah as early as 1625 and in response to Charnock's invitation they came to Calcutta in large numbers and benefited from trade with central Asian countries. They were the negotiators between the English and the Delhi Emperors and the Nawabs of Bengal. In the Surman embassy to Delhi, an Armenian merchant of Calcutta, Khoja Serhand was one of the

members who acted as an interpreter. The embassy was led by John Surman and it got the firman from Emperor Farrucksiyar in 1717. Another old Armenian merchant was Aga Catchikk Arrakiel (1790). The Armenians carried on an extensive trade, as is evident from a report of 1803, from China to the east and to the west as far as the Persian Gulf. They possessed wealth and were the most informed in respect of their profession. Moreover, they were peaceable and loyal as members of the society. They had a church called Armenian described earlier. The second foreign element was the Portuguese in Calcutta's population that lost their identity because of free intermarriage. In Calcutta they became half-castes and were engaged as writers, clerks (keranis), table-servants and toparras. In 1756 Clive imposed a ban on their entry to Calcutta, but this was subsequently withdrawn. On their return they settled in a quarter called *Moorgyhatta*. The place was so called because they were the only people in those days who kept fowls. They established a church, the Portuguese Cathedral to be described afterwards. They were described by Holwell as "the black muslee Portuguese Christians residing in the settlement as Feringhees". They were earlier noted for their acts of plunder and misadventures. Portuguese was the language for servants and a kind of *lingua franca* in Calcutta—religious services were held in it. Persian was the language of diplomacy with natives and Armenians. Through his skill in it Nabakissen rose from being Munshi to Clive in 1760 to great influence and wealth. The *Karanis* or quill-drivers generally used big words. One Besambar Mitra wrote to his master on the outer window of his house having blown down by a Nor'wester: "Honourable Sir—yesterday vesper arrive great hurricane; value of little aperture not fasten; first make great trepidation and palpitation, then precipitate into precinct. God grant Master more long life and more great post".

The third foreign element in Calcutta's population was the Greek. An account of the Greek Church is given afterwards. Like other Europeans they too came to seek fortunes in trade. A notable Greek turning an Indologist was Demetrios Galalonos (1760—1833). His stay at Calcutta was briefer than that in Benares where he died. He spent his life in studies—it was he who translated the Hindu Sastras including the Bhagavat Gita into Greek.

(c) *The church as a social form*(i) *What it is*

Religion appeared in the pervasive emotional attitude of the primitive man. Subsequently the human was set in clear contrast to a superhuman reality regarded as divine and worshipped as a first cause. But life was full of injustice and violence and so the moral sense was compelled to distinguish between superhuman principles of good and of evil. Demons became the counter part of gods. This led to a new fusion of the moral and religious principle. But in the "religions" of China and India the moral principle becomes dominant so that the religious principle becomes obsolescent. In others the two become integrated. When religion is institutionslised, it becomes the property of the community. Localisation leads to communal deities. Among the plethora of divinities, order is achieved by the dominance of one over the rest. And the religion tends either to henotheism or polytheism according to the degree of this dominance. Religious institutions are gradually demarcated from the other social institutions. A distinction comes into being between the *profane* and the *sacred*—the former goes to the society, whereas the latter to a religious body like church. However, the basis of modern differentiation is two-fold, namely, (i) that the church is a body of believers, a distinctly organised membership—it is a cultural association influencing its numbers; and (ii) that the State is an organisation which exercising compulsion and claiming territorial control refrains from interfering with the members or non-members of any such church on religious grounds. And this is styled secularism.<sup>25</sup>

(ii) *Illustrations*

Some of the organisations have already been described in Chapter IX as buildings. Now, the organisations of the 'Brown' people are dealt with as follows. It may be seen that as social forms, they influenced their members.

1. *The Chinatown*—This is a warren of narrow malodorous lanes off Bowbazar (now Bepin Behary Ganguly Street), populated by the Chinese, lit by gas lamps flinging shadows about and

considered dangerous by the romantics. Its shops bulged with exotic things like flattened Peking duck, aromatic tea, Chinese sausages, gaudy tallow candles, Chinese porcelain. The sea IP Temple has always been the most Chinese looking building in China town. It was built in 1905 by specially imported craftsmen.

2. *The Greek Church*—The only Greek church of Asia stands near the Kalighat terminus of the Calcutta Tramways Company. It was erected in 1927 in the Saheb Bagan as the locality was known at the time. The building owes its Doric architecture to A. N. A. Archmandite. The three marble plaques adorning the main entrance are really Greek.

3. *The Jewish Synagogue*—It was a conspicuous red building on the northside of Canning Street and built on the site of the older one known as Neneh Shalom. The present one, called Magham David, was built by Elias David Joseph Ezra who was born on 20 February, 1830 and died on 3 February, 1886. An inscription refers to him as "the father of the Jewish Community, who to orthodox principles, united a heart susceptible of all that is good". The building is 140 feet long and 80 feet wide and the interior contains decorations both rich and solemn. The type of architecture is Italian Renaissance. It was situated in the old 'Black Town', the scene of severe fighting during the siege of Calcutta in 1756.

4. *The Parsi Fire Temple*—The Parsis are the descendents of the Zoroastrians of Persia. After the overthrow of the Sassanian dynasty by the Mahomedans in the 7th century religious persecution began. As a result, a large number of Persians, true to the faith of Zoroaster came to Gujarat. Zoroaster of the 7th century B. C. was a monotheist and believed in a good and holy god called by him Ahura Mazda. His followers Venerate Fire, Water and Earth as sacred elements. Hence, they never burn or bury their dead for fear of defiling the holy.

5. *The Portuguese Cathedral*—The foundation stone of this Cathedra. was laid on 12 March, 1797 and it was consecrated on 27 November, 1799. The total cost of Rs. 90,000 was met almost entirely by Joseph Barretto and his brother Louis—they were Portuguese Noblemen. Two other members of the family were Viceroys to Goa. The site of the Cathedral was originally granted to some Augustinian missionaries during the life of Job

Charnock. They used it to build a humble structure of mud and thatch. In 1700 this was replaced by a brick chapel at the expense of Mrs. Maria Tench. In 1720 the church was enlarged by Mrs. Sebastian Shaw. The mortal remains of these two benefactresses lie on either side of the high altar. During the capture of Calcutta by Seraj-ud-Dowla in 1756 the church lost all its records, but escaped total destruction. For 3 years, the Governor and his Council along with the Protestant community worshipped in this church, till a Chapel adjoining the east gate of the old Fort was erected. The Portuguese sanctuary, thereafter, was restored to its owners. In 1796 it was pulled down to make room for the present building.

#### VI. *The British Social life in Calcutta.*

The British social life in Calcutta falls into three periods : (1) the period of community development (1690-1756) ; (2) the period of territorial expansion (1757-1857) ; and (3) the period of imperialism (1858-1947). These are dealt with below.

##### (a) *The development as a community*

##### 1. *Background*

The English at home had four classes in the 17th century—(i) the nobility ; (ii) the gentry ; (iii) the yeoman ; and (iv) the common people. The fourth class represented three quarters of the total population of over 40 lakhs. The common people were divided into two sub-classes, namely, 'labouring people and out-servants', and 'cottagers and paupers'.<sup>2</sup> England in 1714 was a land of hamlets and villages and its towns were on the coast. The population was roughly 55 lakhs and there was a small increase by 1742. The merchant princes headed urban society. And only a few lawyers and high civil servants could associate with them on terms of equality in wealth and social standing. These merchants often brought up great estates to endow them with social prestige which went with land ownership and enabled their sons and daughters to marry into the aristocracy. Next in importance were the craftsmen and artisans, who bridged the rich and the poor. They worked 14 hours for a modest wage. Below



the artisans and journeymen were the mass of London's population, whose livelihood depended almost entirely on casual employment. Their plight stirred the heart of all benevolent men.<sup>27</sup> The social scene at home compelled the enterprising sons to seek their fortunes abroad.

## 2. *Englishmen at Calcutta*

The English quarters or the White Town of Calcutta was confined to the boundaries of Dihi Kalkatah. Govindpur and Sutanuti were inhabited by the natives. All Englishmen under the regime of Job Charnock resided within the four walls of the company's factory or trading lodge. But Charnock was an exception—he lived with his native wife and children on the bank of the Hooghly. The Englishmen in those days lived in thatched mud-houses till 1696. They were provided with improvised accommodation. And they sat at the public table kept by the authorities in strict order of seniority and observed proper manners while taking their meals. However, there was neither any church, nor tavern nor even sports in those days. But prayers were held at 8 a.m. and the Company's servants had to work from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. After lunch they retired to their cubicles. The married accommodation was provided to the Agent and the members of his council: of course, there were few English ladies in Calcutta till 1700. The Englishmen used to spend their evenings in gossiping, reading and at times in quarrelling. Inside the factory there was a small library of books. Benjamin Adams, a learned and virtuous man came to Calcutta as a Chaplain at the instance of the Company and he brought in 1699 with him a collection of modern books, which Hewer, Samuel Pepy's friend had presented to the library.<sup>28</sup> This was a community life as explained already: it resembles in many respects the primitive communism.

The construction of Fort William begun in 1697 and finished in 1712 brought in more discipline in the social life. The Fort was an irregular tetragon, of brick and mortar, called *pucka*—it was made of brick-dust, lime, molasses and cut hemp and the mixture was tougher than even stone. There was a small tank in the front, called Lal Dighi by the natives and "green" or "Park"

by the Englishmen. It was deepened and broadened in 1709 and beautified with trees.<sup>29</sup> This tank supplied drinking water to the White Town. It was fenced off and it became a rendezvous of the English society till 1756. The area of Calcutta till 1756 was 5077 bighas or 1861 acres.<sup>30</sup> And Englishmen were prohibited to live beyond 10 miles of the Fort.

The population of the White Town was 15,000 in 1704; 22,000 in 1706; 31,000 in 1708; 41,000 in 1710 and 10,4860 in 1752. The town was unhealthy and the mortality rate was high. A hospital was built in 1707, "where many go into, undergo the penance of physick, but few come out to give an account of its operation" according to Hamilton.<sup>31</sup> The adulterous marriage of the Company's surgeon, Dr. William Warren with Elizabeth Binns, a widow, was disliked by the Calcutta Society in those days.<sup>32</sup> Captain Hamilton has left a description of the life lived by ladies and gentlemen in those days.<sup>33</sup> This shows that they lived "splendidly and pleasantly". The forenoon was dedicated to business and after dinner to rest. And the evening was meant for recreation in palanquins in the fields or to gardens, or by water in *budgeroes*. On the river there was a diversion of fishing or fowling or both. Before night-fall they would make friendly visits to one another. The strangers had a bad time—they could neither buy nor sell their goods at the most advantageous markets. It was the Governor and his council that fixed prices at which goods were bought or sold in their markets. And private merchants could not go to the Hooghly Fouja to lodge complaints against this oppression.

The Company's servants were engaged in shaking the pagoda tree; still they never forgot their religious rituals. Here the church operated as a means of social control. Prayers were held in a room in the old Fort at 8 a.m. till St. Anne's church was built in 1709. This church was the chief ornament of the English settlement of Calcutta till 1737 when its steeple collapsed owing to a cyclone that year. And in 1756 it was completely destroyed by Seraj-ud-daulah. It may be noted that Calcutta enjoyed at the

29. Ibid, 311.

30. Cotton—Calcutta old and new, 21.

31. Wilson, I, 289-90; Hamilton—A new account of East-Indies, vol. II, 7.

32. Wilson I., 201.

33. Hamilton, op. cit., 7-8.

time full religious toleration. The Hindus could carry their idols in procession ; the Roman Catholics had their church to lodge their idols in. The Mahommedans were also tolerated. Quarrels and licentious living were frequent and so were robberies and murders. The Company had set up a small cause court of its own in 1704 to deal with civil and criminal disputes between Englishmen. The Governor and his council, however, adjudicated serious crimes and disputes. Subsequently the Mayor's Court was instituted in 1726 under a Royal Patent to deal with serious disputes between English inhabitants. Breach of trust was punished with imprisonment till satisfaction was made. Thieves were branded and turned to the other side of the Hooghly. The Company engaged 31 *paiks* or "black" peons in 1707 to check robberies in Calcuta. Slaves were freely bought, sold and exported.<sup>34</sup>

Since 1690 punch houses for sale of arrack punch and billiard tables were kept in Calcutta.<sup>35</sup> Arrack flavoured with lime-juice, sugar, spices and another ingredient was called *punch*. Mistress Domingo Ash's parlour was the most favourite place for this *punch* and Englishmen flocked to the place where they sipped *punch* and listened to gossips. And this continued from 1695 to 1706. She had to pay Rs. 1,000 for distilling arrack and setting punch every year.<sup>36</sup> On a payment of licence fee of Rs. 150 Charles King was allowed to keep a public house and place of entertainment in 1704. A native named Govindsundar was also permitted to distil and sell arrack. Apollo was the first to start a tavern to come up in Lal Bazar in 1748.<sup>37</sup> But before it Charnock was the first to start a tavern in Calcutta and the Company's books falsified to make it pay. Captain Hill, with whom Charnock was in partnership did not show any mercy to the youngsters according to the ethics of the day. In Charnock's tavern the complainants had the risk of being beaten up by Hill's sergeant.<sup>38</sup> The Company had its own public house to entertain Mughal officials and other foreign dignitaries. Hunting in the nearby jungles and going out for a change of air were in vogue.<sup>39</sup>

34. Wilson, op. cit., 254, 274, 278-9.

35. Hedge's Diary, II, 92.

36. Wilson, op. cit., 146, 256, 276 and 282.

37. Hobbs, H.—John Barley Corn Bahadur (1944), 101.

38. Hobbs—Introducing India, 47.

39. Wilson, I, 312, 329, 341.

Education started with the charity School<sup>40</sup> (later Free School), which came into existence in 1729 out of the legacies left by the Rev. Joshua Thomlinson and his wife Elizabeth.<sup>41</sup>

(b) *The Company's territorial expansion*

The Englishmen who came to Calcutta in the 17th and 18th centuries as 'Writers' (clerks) in the service of the East India Company or free merchants or in other capacities, were all exiles in a far-off land. They brought with them their manners, customs and institutions and tried to turn Calcutta into a second London as far as practicable. At this time London had its coffee-houses, taverns and "assembly rooms", its drinking, card-playing and other forms of gambling and the like. Calcutta of those days exhibited these.

(i) *Coffee-houses and Taverns*

The British brought with them their amusements in taverns, coffee-houses and inns as these were prevalent in those days in London. These were called 'Punch Houses' as the British today name them in London as *Pubs*. Prior to 1695 one Samuel Shaw was allowed to keep a public house and some Bengali liquor merchants imported foreign liquors even from 1757. These shops were close to Lalbazar area and the Clientele included Europeans, Indians and European ladies. In these coffee houses and taverns Europeans drank and ate a lot and a few natives of the soil could join them on invitations or on special occasions. Dances, piano-playing etc. were organised. Some Europeans termed the taverns as *Hotels*. The *London* and *Harmonic* taverns were situated near Lalbazar and they provided rooms for a few days' stay and thereby operated as *Hotel* in the 1780s. There were also the *Union* and *Wrights'* taverns near St. John's Church; near the Calcutta Exchange stood the *Crown* and *Anchor Hotel*. In Dacre's Lane stood Moor's Tavern and Beard's Hotel. It was then the fashionable quarter. There was also the Frenchman Gallais' *Tavern*, famous for Masonic banquets.<sup>42</sup>

The Coffee-houses and taverns were the precursors of the modern "clubs". Carey in his *Good old days of John Company* states thus : "Those who can look back as far as 1814 will remember that the state of society in England in those days was widely different from what it is now. Hard drinking was then so much the fashion that it was regarded as a sign of manhood to indulge in it. Foul language, gambling and duelling here considered the accomplishments of a gentleman. The same fashion was followed in India". For a rupee a patron could have a dish of coffee and was entitled, free of charge to the perusal of the newspapers kept on the table. At the taverns, dinners were provided to order at a charge of one *gold Mohur* per head, exclusive of desserts and wine.<sup>43</sup>

## (ii) *Hotels and Restaurants*

The first regular Hotel was started in 1800 by one Wilson for the newly arrived English ladies and gentlemen. They were received at Fulta, 20 miles to the south of Calcutta and accommodated in this Hotel till they found their friends' places or went to live with their relations. The first established Hotel was the *Spences* in 1830. By 1840 several Hotels sprang into existence in the area, such as the *Bents'* Hotels in British Indian Street and the *Benito's* in government place North. The Great Eastern Hotel came into being in 1840 through the efforts of D. Wilson who had his Wilson's or Auckland Hotel there in 1835. It was taken over by the West Bengal State in 1979. Years later the Italians opened restaurants in Calcutta. The *Pelities* and *Firpo's* became famous. In Coffee-houses and restaurants people congregated and discussed matters of importance. This gave rise to clubs. Some Hotels were cosmopolitan, as for example, *Bristol*, *Continental* and *Grand*—all on the Chowringhee. Of them only the last one exists. In the Park Street area came up the *Park*, while the *Hindustan International* on Lower Circular Road.

The monthly charges for stay at the *Spences' Hotel* in 1841 were as follows : Rs. 100 for one person and one room ; for a second room Rs. 150 extra. For a day one had to pay Rs. 6 per room ; for a guest Rs. 5 per day. These rates included

43. Roy, B. V.—*Old Calcutta Cameos* (1943), 25-6.

morning tea, breakfast, tiffin (lunch), afternoon tea and dinner. For wines and liquor one had to pay extra.

### (iii) *Amusements*

#### I. *The milieu*

In olden days people complained of Calcutta as being dull, of there being little recreation. At that time there had been little work—the business transacted required only a few hours at the arrival of the ships from Europe. The Portuguese Kerani did the writing part in a slovenly fashion. There was little letter-writing, since Clive introduced the first postal system in 1766. Very little music was available because Calcutta had only some two dozen ladies. Yet the court of Directors considered that number sufficient. Besides, there were few instruments for ladies to play on—pianos were very dear, for a grand one cost Rs. 2,000. Europeans, however, went to nautches given at Hindu Houses at Doorga Poojas. In 1792 an innovation was introduced, namely, a combination of English airs with Hindustani songs, as reported by Carey in *The Good Old Days of Honourable John Company* (p. 76). There were no carriage drives, now any course. Riding was also dangerous beyond the bounds of Calcutta, because of wild animals, the boar and the tiger.

However, the Europeans later on used to pass their wearisome days in their ways. A few hours sufficed for business from 9 to 12—a *hookah* and a hasty breakfast brought them to the middle of the day. The dinner was at about 2 O'Clock—after that there was the smoking from a highly ornamented *hookah* in the charge of a *hookah-border* and the invariable siesta followed. At the time of siesta, both ladies and gentlemen undressed and went to bed. Undressing was a necessity because of lack of punkahs and of glass windows, only ones being made of twisted cane. They had two hours of sleep from 3 to 5 and were up again—some went to fishing or walking in the Dalhousie square with its grove on the east side, which was Belgravia or Hyde Park of the day. A few joined the pig-sticking match or took to tiger-hunt in the jungle of Chowringhee plain. Some took the air in a *palki*; a favourite recreation was boating in a handsome budgerow with a band of music in attendance. Many a sailing excursion took place between Thana Fort near Botanic Gardens and the Dutch

**Settlement of Baranagar.** Returning home, tea and cards filled the time till 10 O'clock, the supper hour. They paid visits in the evening, in white jackets as was the rule even beyond Wellesley's time, for in office they wore black coats. Visits were short and half a dozen could be made in one evening, except on theatre night, for Calcutta had its theatre to the north east of the Writers' Buildings.

In this way amusements developed. And Sir J. Shore recorded in 1775 : "Dancing, riding, hunting and shooting are now our employments ; copying work was left to *Keranis* and the European was practically often merely an expensive instrument for singing his name".<sup>44</sup>

## II. *Types described*

Some of the amusements are noted below : *Dancing*—Dancing was a form of amusement much favoured by both the sexes and inspite of the climate, the English settlers indulged in it to a large extent. Notice appeared for a series of "assemblies" to be held at the "Harmonic House" once a week in November, 1784. This seems to have been the commencement of *public* gaities in Calcutta. At this the proprietors of the "London Tavern" advertised a series of similar "assemblies" at their house. At the Harmonic, it was notified : "No hookahs to be admitted upstairs". Curious rules, *inter alia*, were framed for the first of a series of "subscription dances" at the Calcutta Theatre (1792) : "(1) That minutes be danced on the nights of dress assemblies only. (2) That ladies be taken out to dance minutes according to the rank of their husbands held in the King's or Hon'ble Company's service".

A ball in India was different from that in England. The Company did not include old ladies, since there had been a dearth of them. Young unmarried ladies were also scarce and naturally more in demand. A white cloth, coated with French chalk covered floor ball rooms and afforded a smooth surface for the feet.

One Dignity Ball of 1829 deserves mention. It was described in the *United Service Journal*. The ball room was lighted by a profession of tallow candles in lustres and girandoles and furnished

with green baize benches and a varied assortment of chairs. The music consisted of two violins, a tambourine and a triangle. The performers would be deaf, blind or lame. At last the host, a red-faced individual with lank hair informed the ladies and gentlemen with a bow that supper was ready.<sup>45</sup>

It may be noted that Minuets and county dances were much in favour. It is said that many English women in Calcutta died of consumption brought on by the excessive physical strain of dancing through the night.<sup>45</sup>

2. *Theatricals*—Since the foundation of Calcutta in 1690 until about the middle of the 18th century, the Calcuttans—European and Indian—found no time for the cultivation of the finer arts, especially the arts of Thelia and Melpomene, the Muses of comedy with Tragedy (out of the Nine Muses of Greek Mythology). The English settlers were engrossed with their commercial activities, shaking the "gold mohur tree" and carrying on the administration. Their sole aim seemed to amass a fortune as quickly as possible and then to leave for home. However, the first English Playhouse on Theatre was opened in Calcutta at Lalbazar in 1745 at the corner of the Rope Walk (now Mission Row). The players were all amateurs. The second was the Calcutta Theatre opened in 1775 at the corner of Clive Street and Lyons Range. It cost about a lakh of rupees, raised by subscription with shares of Rs. 100 each. Mrs. Bristow, the wife of a senior Calcutta merchant occasionally appeared on the stage, which set the fashion of ladies taking part in productions. The third was Lebedeff's Theatre opened in 1795 by a Russian named Herasim Lebedeff at Doomtollah (Ezra Street). Here English plays and Bengali translations of English plays were produced with Bengali actors and actresses. In 1797 came a fourth theatre at Wheler Place at the present Govt Place North. The fifth was the "Athenaeum" opened about the same time at 18, Circular Road. The sixth was the Chowringhee Theatre started at the corner of Chowringhee and Theatre Road (Shakespeare Sarani) on 25 November, 1813. Mrs. Esther Leach was one of the actresses.



Sheridan's *Rivals* was produced. The theatre was destroyed by fire on 31 May, 1839 and the land was purchased by Dwarkanath Tagore, Rabindranath's grandfather for Rs. 15,000. The seventh was the "Boitaconnah Theatre" opened in 1827; the eighth was the Calcutta Theatre II established by Mrs. Leach at the corner of Govt Place and Waterloo Street (Ezra Mansions) in 1836. And the ninth was the "Saus Souci" opened on March 8, 1841 in Park Street by Mrs. Leach with James Sheridan Knowle's play, *The wife*. Other theatres came thereafter, for example, "the Lyceum", "Open House" etc.

3. *Duelling*—When a gentleman felt his "personal honour" affected by any fact, deed or word of another person, he challenged the latter to give him "personal satisfaction", as it was called, i.e. to fight a duel. The challenged person had the choice of weapons and either swords or pistols or sometimes both were used. Each party chose a second to accompany him to the spot selected for the combat.

But a famous duel took place between Hastings, the Governor-General and Francis, a member of his Council over the state policy at the Council. The Governor-General wrote a letter to Francis who replied thus: "You have left me no alternative but to demand *personal satisfaction* of you for the affront you have offered me". The challenge was accepted. Col. Watson, the Chief Engineer of Fort William became 'second' to Francis, while Col. Pearse the Commandant of the Artillery, 'second' to Hastings. The place of meeting was fixed at Alipore near the Belvedere House. The event was commemorated by having the road named "Duel Avenue". Francis had his powder damp—his pistol did not fire. He was wounded. Dr. Cambell Principal and Dr. Francis, the G.G.'s surgeon attended the wounded Francis at the Belvedere House. He was cured.

4. *Gambling and Horse-racing*—Englishmen imbibed the habit of gambling at home. In the 18th century this became an obsession with them. And when they came to Calcutta they could not get rid of this "ruling passion". This was prevalent in Calcutta, mostly with card-games such as Ombre, quadrille and spe-

cially whist. High play was the fashion and fortunes were won and lost. One case may be mentioned of Philip Francis, a Member of the Council, who won from Barwell, another Member, the sum of £ 40,000 at cards. Cornwallis dealt a blow at this.

Horse-racing was an English form of gambling introduced to Calcutta. Usually races used to be run in the morning until 1818 when they began in the afternoon. It was very popular. The first ground was in the Chowringhee paddy fields, subsequently at Akra farm or Barud-khana, (powder-store) below Garden Reach

5. *The Course and "Public evenings"*—The evening drive on the Course formed a regular part of daily routine of the English residents in Calcutta, both male and female. The course was a carriage road running southward from the Esplanade. It roughly corresponded to the present Race-Course. At night, besides balls, dances, dinners etc., "public evenings" were held once a week by 3 or 4 Head Ladies of the Settlement. These were more conversation parties in which it was possible to see and converse with all the beauty and fashion of the settlement. The Company usually assembled by about 10 or 11 O' clock. They laughed, talked and walked about for about two hours and then sat to a cold supper and went home.

6. *Holy and unholy alliances*—The number of English women in Calcutta was very small compared with that of men. And the unmarried young women came to Calcutta for "Isband-hunting". The prize sought by the English damsels having borne the hazards of a voyage was "three hundred a year, dead or alive" as explained already. After their arrival they first went to the Church for Sunday service. And it was under "an ancient sanction" any gentleman, without being known to her, could meet a lady at the church-portals and lead her to her seat. In this way the captivating arrivals quickly became brides. However, "unholy alliances" were also contracted by Englishmen in this country.<sup>48</sup>

7. *Snuff-box and Hookah*—The habit of snuff-taking was fashionable in English society. If a person would offer a cigarette from his case, the beau or fop would, with a graceful bow and a flourish, flicked open his golden snuff-box and offered a pinch

of "prime Maconba". Regarding tobacco-smoking, pipes and cigars were available in very limited quantities. As a result English men and women took to hookah-smoking. When an Englishman had finished his tea in the morning his hookah-burder softly slipped the upper end of the snake or tube of the *hookah* into his hand.

8. *Dress-up*—The dress of an Englishman consisted of "a large bushy wig tied at the ends", a long coat reaching below the knees, with large sleeves and cuffs, finely embroidered vest, breeches buckled tight at the knees, long stockings and shoes decorated with buckles. Men took a fancy to bright colours and to laces and embroideries in their dress. They had their vests or waistcoats made of gold brocade or blue satin embroidered with silver.

The hair was generally worn long, pomaded and powdered and tied into a queue behind—a wig was worn on ceremonial occasions. The hair-dresser was thus indispensable in those days for ladies and gentlemen. And the household staff included a wig-barbar, a shaving barber and a hairdresser.

### C. *Englishmen's imperial attitude*

(i) *Bigotry*—In the first period and a part of the second the English population was tiny and they lived a close corporate life. They lived together in their factory and dined together at their common table with the Governor presiding and the ensign at the bottom to act as toaster, officer, carver and chaplain. Trade and trade only was their business. They genuinely attempted to make themselves agreeable to the Indians. To this end they adopted Indian habits in food and dress and frequently married Indian women. They showed deep respect for Indian authority and an intelligent curiosity about the native customs and habits—in all these there was a refreshing absence of moral vanity. Even in the days of Clive and Hastings, Englishmen had mixed in a free social intercourse with the natives, learnt their language and appreciated native culture. But this attitude withered and died rapidly during the Governor-Generalships of Cornwallis and Wellesley. Cornwallis excluded all natives from the higher posts in government service and discontinued the honours customarily paid to Indian nobles. Wellesley carried this process further and

excluded all Indians and Eurasians from the regular entertainment at Government House. The more English society isolated itself from native life, the more bigoted became its attitude. This bigotry was encouraged by the growing evangelism amongst the English middle classes. The attitude of moral righteousness was strengthened by the policy of imperial expansion : a race wallowing in abominable heathenism was unfit to rule. Thus Marquess of Hastings (Governor-General, 1813-23) stated in 1813 : "The Hindoo appears a being nearly limited to mere animal functions and even in them indifferent. Their proficiency and skill in the several lines of occupation to which they are restricted, are little more than the dexterity which any animal with similar conformation but with no higher intellect than a dog, an elephant, or a monkey, might be supposed to be capable of attaining. It is enough to see this in order to have full conviction that such a people can at no period have been more advanced in civil policy".<sup>49</sup> The British Raj carried out many improvements. And India had to pay a heavy price for this. It is a miracle of history that the Indian Mutiny (1857) did not happen sooner and with greater effect, as observed by Plumb.<sup>50</sup>

## (ii) *The Anglo-Indian Society*

The men and women composing the society left home in their immaturity. This was due to the conditions of the Company's servants. And the residents (Calcuttans) whose daughters were educated in the parent country (London) had a double inducement to get them out. *First*, it was costly to maintain them at home ; *second*, there was the fear that in the case of their arrival at the age of 23, there would be "nobody coming to marry them". The spinsterhood in the 19th century consisted of three classes—(1) daughters of civil, military-servants, merchants and others settled in India, sent to England for education and returned between the ages of 16 and 20 ; (2) sisters and near relatives of brides who had married Indian officers ; and (3) orphan daughters—legitimate and illegitimate—of Indian residents, educated at the Presidencies. There were spinsters' secret societies, that had their counterpart in Jawab clubs formed by bachelors.

49. Spear, T.G.P.—*The Nawabs*. 201.

50. Plumb, J. N.—*England in the 18th century* (Pelican, 1850), 171-78.

The spinster husband-hunters introduced a phrase in respect of young civilians, "worth £ 300 a year dead or alive", as explained earlier. India, was a marriage mart. A satirical poem in 1813, called the "Anglo-Indian" described some of the ladies imported :

Pale faded stuffs, by time grown faint  
Will brighten up through art ;  
A Britain gives their faces paint,  
For sale at India's mart.<sup>51</sup>

The Company's servants in Calcutta degenerated in intellect, good manners and social habits. They became backward and bigotted, conceited and ill-informed. They became snobs, and came to judge things by the wrong standard. Thus the best painter, the best singer, the best actor, the best scholar, the best horseman, the best musician, the best of anything in India was taken to be the best of the kind respectively in the world. As rightly observed by Stocqueler : their "English mind subsided to the Anglo-Indian level". In the arrangements of the general society individuals meet on terms of equality. But in the Calcutta society there was "the official *hauteur*" of men who in England would be esteemed as very ordinary persons and considered bores. However, they thought that the extrinsic circumstance of their being counsellors secretaries, judges, magistrates or staff officers was sufficient, to exalt them in the social scale. This is a feature common to all colonial governments. "But it is well-known that in England", observes Stockqueler, "official station is thrown off, even in thought, in mixed private society, and that a Melbourne and Wellington are not distinguishable in company from their continuing there to wear the airs of office ; and never desire to restrain the sociality of a party by trying to *look* as ministers".<sup>52</sup>

### (iii) *Sahibs and their social habits*

The word, '*Sahib*' denotes the title by which European gentlemen and Europeans generally are addressed and spoken of by the natives. The term is Arabic and originally it meant 'a companion'. In the *Arabian Knights* (Burton I, 218) it is the title of

a wazir.<sup>53</sup> Apart from Englishmen in the Company's service, the Englishmen were divided into three main classes—the mercantile ; the retailers ; and the artisans. The British community became addicted to lavishness much in excess of the 'nabobs' of the era and became snobs as already explained. There were mainly three tiers in their society in order of importance—(a) the 'heaven-born' civil service ; (b) the officers of the Army ; and (c) the British businessmen.

### 1. *Bengal club*

#### (a) *Clubs*

The big bosses of these people organised in 1827 a club called the Bengal Club. It was modelled on the *Athenaum* in London (1824). In 1845 the club moved to T. B. Macaulay's palatial building on Chowringhee. In 1857 the *hookah* became obsolete and in its place came pipe-smoking and cherrouts. Sir Charles Metcalf was the President of the Bengal Club from its inception in 1827 till 1838. Upto 1870 the presidentship was the monopoly of the I.C.S. and the Army officers. For the first time the mercantile class elected one of them to the post of the President in 1871. H. R. H. Prince Albert Victor, Queen Victoria's consort visited the club in 1889. After Independence Prime Minister Pt. Nehru visited the Club and lunched there in 1953.

### 2. *Calcutta Club*

In olden times the Grand Hotel premises were located at 16 and 17 Chowringhee, of which no. 17 was meant for the Royal Theatre-goers. The latter was occupied by what was then called the Calcutta Club. The members were Europeans, mostly merchants, brokers and public servicemen. It used to be managed by Col. Abbott. Because of discrimination in the club, the elite of the city-Europeans and Indians-formed a mixed club named. 'The Calcutta Club Ltd.' Sir R. N. Mukherjee, Sir Charles Allen and others joined together and at the junction of Chowringhee and Lower Circular (J. C. Bose) Road a two-storied club house was built on 4.66 acres of land. Lord Sinha, Maharaja of Cooch Behar and others became members. And the club started function-

53. Hobson-Jobson, 781-2.

ing from April, 1907. The club has 4 tennis courts, a women's ward, a hard court and other amenities. The women's ward was converted into a covered swimming pool in 1957. Since 1967 only Indians are being elected Presidents.

3. *Calcutta Golf Club*—It was founded in 1829 with the idea of improving the maidan. In 1891 a Ladies section was added. Prior to Independence Indians were not admitted. However, men and woman have now taken to Golf-playing.

4. *Free Mason's lodge*—This existed in 1744. A bell and a supper were given to the members of the Company's service in the city at Old Court House in 1789. In 1811 on St. John's Day the members of the Masonic Lodges of Calcutta and Fort William assembled at Moore's Rooms and preceded by the 24th Regiment band went in a procession to the church. In 1812 there were three lodges—'Star in the East'; 'True Friendship'; and the 'Marine Lodge'. The Masonic Fraternity became a large influential body.

5. *Lake Rowing Club*—By excavating the Lake in the 1920's a Stadium was built up. There was only the Calcutta Rowing Club for the Europeans. After Independence Rowing activities as a sport developed and the first Lake Club came up. The Bengal Rowing Club, the University Rowing Club and the Swimming Club came into existence.

6. *Rotary Club*—The Rotary International was founded in 1905 by an Attorney, P. P. Harris of Chicago, U. S. A. It was to foster the "ideal of service" and fellowship among the professionals and the businessmen of the world. And the first Rotary Club in Calcutta was opened in 1919. The main unit of the club meets every Tuesday at Lunch.

7. *Saturday Club*—This is situated at 7 Wood Street and founded in 1878. Formerly its membership was limited to Europeans, especially the business community. Now it is thrown open to all.

8. *Tollygunge Club*—It was established in 1895 and is situated opposite to the Tollygunge Tram Depot. The club provides Racing, Golf, Swimming and Tennis. It was formerly in-corpora-

ted in 1909 as a '*Ltd. Club*' The membership is limited to less than 1,000.<sup>54</sup>

(b) *Sports and pastimes*

1. *Cricket and soccer*—The Britishers introduced these games into this country in the latter part of the 19th century. Soccer or Football was played in Calcutta in the 1880's. The English civilians from the trading houses formed their exclusive club like Calcutta Football Club, Dalhousie Athletic Club, Rangers and Customs. The Indian Football Association (I.F.A.) was established in 1880 and the I.F.A. Shield competition started in 1893. The Mohun Bagan Football Club was founded in 1889—in 1911 it won the I.F.A. Shield after defeating the British Military Team, the East Yorks.

The first cricket match in India was played in Calcutta in 1804 between Etonian Civil Servants and other Britishers and thereafter in Aligarh in 1879. Again it was played in Calcutta in the 1880s. The Parsis formed their club in 1890. The first cricket team came to visit India in 1889-90. The Cricket Association of Bengal and Assam was formed in 1928. A mixed play started. A Cambridge Blue, R. B. Lugden, an English merchant and a cricket enthusiast formed the Bengal Ranji Team in 1930. In 1932 the first cricket test between England and India was held.

2. *Hockey*—It was developed and played by the mixed races in the 1890s. The Beighton Cup was introduced in 1895. The hockey players came from the Anglo-Indian Community as well. The Indians became Olympic Hockey Champions first in 1928 at Amsterdam and continued this in 1932, 1936, 1948, 1952, 1956, 1964 and 1980.

3. *Polo*—It is a game played by horsemen using flexible sticks to drive a wooden ball on a grassy lawn between two goal posts at 8 yards apart at each end. The play-field measures 360 yards by 160 yards. Each team consists of 4 players and the playing time is 45 minutes divided into 5 periods or *chukkers* of 7.5 minutes' duration each. It was introduced in India in the 13th century by the Mahomedans. In the 19th century it went West

54. Roy, B., *op cit.*, 131-34, 115-19.



through British Tea Planters of Assam. In 1860 the *Calcutta Polo Club* was formed. Regulations take place on the Ellenborough course within the Calcutta Race ground during winter. (c) *The domestic establishment*

In the 18th century Calcutta the problem in the English households was not a paucity of servants, but the other way about. Householders were burdened with too many servants, none of whom could be spared.

(d) *The vice-regal hospitality*

The pomp and pageantry attended the Govt-House functions. The State forms and ceremonials remind one of medieval ages. The court regulations were drawn up by the Marquess of Hastings and they show the length to which the etiquette of the time was carried. The regulations specified the method of opening the levee and the drawing room. They prescribed the details of State dinner, balls, the invitation cards and the like.

## VI. Bengali society

(a) *The different classes in Calcutta*<sup>55</sup>

In the pre-Charnock days the Calcutta town was peopled by *Pods*, *Sikaries*, *Jeliahs* and *Duliahs*. Besides, there were the higher caste officials in the Mughal government, the priestly classes round the temples of Kali and Shiva, and the mercantile classes like the Setts, Bysacks and the like. Then came the foreign merchants like the Armenians, Europeans, Persians, Chinese and Abyssinians to exploit the commercial potentialities of the mart. The pre-Charnock settlers saw the possibilities of investment in land and house property. In addition to the mercants and landlords there were middle class people who were attracted to the town because of various professions coming in the wake of the expanding trade of the English. The lower group of the middle class consisted of the *Chopdars*, *Santabardars*, *Abdars* and the like. Moreover, from the neighbouring areas came palanquin-bearers, ghary-walahs, artisans, coolies, pedlars, weavers, spice-dealers etc.

(i) *The Setts and Bysacks*

The 'black' town was noted for the predominance of its bazars. The port Saptagram had been losing its utility. So the Setts and Bysacks thought it advisable to migrate to Calcutta. They were the first settlers in Govindpur after cleaning the jungles there. As such they are called the "jungle-cleaning pioneers". Kalidas the founder of the Bysack family was the first to settle in the thirties of the 17th century. Subsequently three other Bysack families headed by Basudev, Barpati and Karunamoy shifted to the Lal Dighi area. The other single family of the Setts headed by Mukundaram Shresthi worked in collaboration with the Bysacks. The Bysack-Setts were the earliest immigrants to Calcutta. Their income was derived from the cotton weavers of Baranagar. They amassed a large fortune and set up in the Maidan area a factory that could employ 2,500 weavers. However, in the second half of the 18th century, they had to move to Burrabazar because of the acquisition of Govindpur area for building a new fort there. Here they removed their factory and mart and began to carry on direct trade with the English and other foreign merchants in Eastern India. Thus they became the dependable collaborators—"our most secure merchants"—with the English merchants. In 1707 the Setts had their rents reduced by the English because "they being possessor of the grounds, which they made into gardens before we had possession of the Towns being the Company Merchants and Inhabitants of the place". The Setts became gradually more prominent than the Bysacks.

Mukunda Ram's son was Lal Mohan. Beverley in his *Report on the Causes of Calcutta* speaks of the Tank Square (Dalhousie Square/*Bivadi Bag*) being named Lal Dighi after him. His successors—Giridhari, Brajaram, Sundarram and Jagannath—amassed wealth as 'Dadney' merchants. A subsequent member, Janardan (1706) acted as the Chief Banian of the English Company. His Successors—Banarasi (1712) and Baisnabdas (1727)—acted as the Company's brokers. They became so very powerful that the British Agents and Governors became jealous of them. The substitution of the Dadney merchants system by that of direct agency dominated by the *gomostas* led to the decline of the fortunes of the Setts and Bysacks. Hence they invested their wealth in land. Thus Sobharam Bysack, the 11th descendant from Kali-

das owned 37 houses in Burrabazar besides 3 gardens and one pond. An idea of his wealth may be had from bonds from Europeans and Armenians valued at 5,27,112 Arcot rupees and ventures to Bussora, Suez and Bombay.

## (ii) *Subarna Baniks*

The *Suvarna Baniks* or gold-merchant families—the Mallicks, the Seals, the Dattas, the Dhars and the Lahas—came to possess wealth. The first among the Mallicks (Deys) was Nemai Charan (1736) of Sindariapatti in Burrabazar. His father, Nayan Chand and grandfather Darpanarain set up a number of charitable establishments in Benaras, Mahesh as well as in Nabadwip and Hooghly. Nayan was responsible for providing Cross Street. Nemai Charan inherited Rs. 40 lakhs, which rose at his death to Rs. 3 crores. Much of it was derived from salt trade and from professional advice given to litigants. William Hickey in his *Memoirs*, Vol. IV speaks of him thus: "This man had an extraordinary efficiency in our laws. He was perfectly conversant with the distinction between an equitable and a legal title".

The Mallicks (Seals) of Chorebagan came into limelight with Madhu Seal. The family originally belonged to Saptagram. Thereafter they came to Hooghly and Chinsurah and in the forties of the 18th century to Calcutta. Jayram, the 15th descendant from Madhu removed himself to Govindpur. Later the family shifted to Pathuriaghata. One of his successors, Gangavishnu expanded his trade even to Singapore and China. Rajendra a later member of the family settled in Chorebagan. He is remembered today as the founder of the Marble Palace.

The Seals of Colootolla were yet another family associated with Calcutta since the mid-18th century. They acquired their affluence from business conducted in Calcutta. Motilal (b. 1792) acted as the Company's *Mutsuddi*. The Roys (formerly Dhars) of Posta owed their wealth to Lakshi Kanta, who was a banker to Clive. His grandson, Sukhamoy acted as the Dewan of Elijah Impey and was given the title of Maharaja.

## (iii) *Mutsuddis, Banians and Dewans*

The history of the Bengali opulent settlers reveals that they started as independent traders, but became collaborators with the

English and then sank gradually into the position of *Mutsuddis*, *Banians* and *Dewans*. This may be illustrated by the families of Maharaja Nabakissen Bahadur of Sovabazar, Ram Charan Roy of Pathuriaghata, Gocool Chund Ghosal of Bhukailas and Ganga Gobinda Singh of Jorasanko. Their example was followed by Cossinath Babu of Burrabazar, Doorgacharan Mitter of Sutanuty, Banomali Sarkar of Kumartooly, Krishna Prosad Halder of Jaun Bazar and others. They supplemented their trade income with investment in land. An idea of their wealth may be had from the following instances. Ram Dulal Dey left estates and movable property worth Rs. 1 crore and 25 lakhs. Ganga Govind spent 15 lakhs of rupees for his mother's *Sradh*. Nabakissen caused 4000 Cavalry to escort the procession of his son's marriage.

#### (iv) *Mohamedans*

Calcutta had a sprinkling of Mussalmans as well. In 1822 Moonshee Suddaruddin to Barwell resided in Mutchwa Bazar. There were also Mahomedan royalties in exile such as the hostage princes of Mysore, Wazir Ali of Oudh and Nawab Mir Jafar. Besides, the Muslim Shia traders from west and central Asia congregated in Chitpur area—they migrated from Hooghly which had become a Shia Colony. A palatial building like Buckingham House situated in the settlement was owned by Muhammad Reza Khan, a Shi'ite immigrant. The Hooghly immigrants became *Vakeels* of the Company. Some of the them were employed in the Sadar Dewani and Faujdari courts because of their knowledge in Arabic and Persian. They owned estates in Jaun Bazar, Colinga, Metiaburuj besides Chitpur. Because of the existence of Mahomedans a Madrasa was set up in Calcutta in 1781. However, the majority of the Muslim population belonged to the lower echelon of workers, domestic servants, weavers, artisans and peasants.

#### (v) *Non-Bengali Hindus*

Amongst the non-Bengali Hindus were the North Indian Kshatris, Agarwal and Marwari Oswals. Dewan Gopinath of Burrabazar was a Kshetri whose wealth at death (1792) was Rs. 66 lakhs. The Banking House of Jagat Setts had one *Kothi* or office in Calcutta. Manohardas of M/s. Monohardas Dwarkadas of the Agarwals eclipsed the above banking house. In the

next century the Marwaris began to seek fortunes in Calcutta. There were settled some Maratha families who came in the wake of the raids of the mid-18th century. The Gujarati merchants set up their trade also. The First Parsi merchant in the town was Dadabhai Berhamji Bantji who arrived in 1767. Rustomji Cowasji Banaji became one of the richest merchants in the early years of the 19th century. Omichand, a Punjabi Sikh grew to be millionaire as a banker and owned a garden-house in Hateebagan. Huzuri Mull was another Sikh merchant related to Omichand. He served as an agent of Jagat Sett. He owned vast estates in Kalighat and Bowbazar areas.

(b) *Bengali manners and customs*<sup>56</sup>

In the 18th century upto the early 19th century the Indian residents of Calcutta were mostly engaged in business with the English or in service under them and many of them amassed large fortunes. Thus a news item published in September 1818 recorded that Gopi Mohun Tagore left a fortune of Rs. 80 lakhs at his death. The *Calcutta Gazette* dated 12 April, 1792 recorded that Cossinaut Babu left at his death Rs. 60 lakhs. He has left a burning ghat after his name, called Kasi Mitter's ghat. The money amassed by them was invested in land purchase.

(i) *Durga puja*

The money amassed was spent in a lavish manner on the occasions of marriage, funeral ceremonies and *Durga Pujas*. This wealth-spending activities included commercial enterprises such as founding banks, land-or-house-purchases, founding schools and text-book societies, publishing books, encouraging female education and other social reforms. Works of philanthropic or religious nature were also undertaken for example, building roads, bridges, ghats, temples, *dharamsalas* etc.

Rudra Roy, the king of Nadia was the first to introduce *Durga Puja* in 1662. The number of Durga and Kali pujas came to 1062 and 233 in the year 1989 in Calcutta. L. De Grandpre, an officer of the French Army, visited Calcutta and left an account of a "superstition" associated with "madam Dourga". If anyone was drowned in the Ganges, it was believed that he or she would

"enjoy eternal happiness". To this end Durga had contrived this accident. Because of this the bystanders did not try to avert the catastrophe—they were "afraid of incurring the displeasure of their fair divinity by assisting him to get into a boat or reach the shore".<sup>56a</sup> Secondly, the festival had a grand nautch in it. It is reported by Holwell in 1766 that the European gentlemen and ladies were invited to see the dances, hear the music and have their meals. The dancers introduced came from the Muslim community and in some cases from Burma as well. The Government Gazette dated 12 October, 1826 recorded the lavish expenditure incurred by Gopimohan Deb. Ward has recorded the expenditure of a Durga Puja in 1829. According to him, Calcutta spent, in those days Rs. 50 lakhs with a sacrifice of 1,000 goats. All these were private *pujas*. A community puja was started for the first time in 1910 in Bowanipore on Balaram Bose Ghat Road. In 1926 it was introduced in Simla by the Byam Samity there. Now, these pujas have become popular.

### (ii) *Gifts and donations*

The purse-strings of the wealthy citizens were open to the demands for charitable, philanthropic and religious works. Thus Dwarkanath Tagore gave to the District Charitable Society a lakh of rupees. Raja Baidyanath Roy—one of the sons of Maharaja Sukhmoy Roy—donated Rs. 50,000 to the Hindu College funds and Rs. 20,000 to the cause of female education. His father was the first Bengal Director of the Bank of Bengal who built a road running from Uluberia to the Lion Gate of the Jagannath Temple at Puri. Raja Shib Chandra—brother of Raja Baidyanath—built a bridge over the river Karmanasa to help the pilgrims on their way to Benaras.

### (iii) *The lavish spending*

The lavish expenditure was incurred on marriage, funeral and Durga Puja. Thus *Samachar Darpan* dated 12 February, 1820 records that on the occasion of the marriage of the two sons of Ramdulal Sircar on the 7th and 11th *Falgun*, the 1st and 2nd *Falgun* had been fixed for the entertainment of the European

guests and the 13th and 14th Falgoon for Hindu, Arab and Mughal guests. They were to attend the dinner at his house in Simla and to see the nautches.

The *Calcutta Gazette* dated 27 September, 1787 published that Neemoo Mullick, the rich Banker spent Rs. 3 lakhs in his mother's *Shradha*. It appears from *Sambad Kaumudi* dated 14 May, 1825 that at Ramdulal Sircar's death and funeral ceremony 7-8 thousands Pandits from Kashmir, Maharastra, Kanauj, Benaras were brought and the gifts bestowed included golden and silver utensils, elephants, boats etc. Several lakhs of destitute people were given alms of a rupee each.

The *Calcutta Gazette* dated 20 October, 1814 records that *Durga Puja* had nautches with the nautch-girl Nikhee at the mansion of Raja Kissen Chand Roy, son of Maharaja Sukhmoy Roy. It appears from a newspaper report in 1829 that the Governor-General Lord William Bentinck attended the Durga Puja festival at Sovabazar Rajbati along with the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Combermere and other Englishmen.

#### (iv) *Bengali theatres*

The first Bengali plays produced by Lebedeff at Doomtollah were the Bengali translations of *Disguise* and *Love is the best doctor*, acted by Bengali actors and actresses. This was in 1795. Thereafter, Bengali students and amateur gentlemen took roles in English plays. Students of the David Hare Academy performed Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *Julius Caesar*. The first Bengali amateur stage was set up at Nabin Chandra Basu's house in Shyambazar and the first play produced was Bharat Chandra's *Vidyasundar* (1835). In its wake many dramatic clubs sprang up all over the town. Then the *Belgachia Theatre* was established in 1858. Others also came into being—Pathuriaghata Banga Natyalaya, Bowbazar Club and Baghbazar Amateur Theatre, with which were associated Girish Ghosh and Ardhendu Mustaffi. The first Bengal Public Theatre called the "National Theatre" was set up in 1872. The next one was the Hindu National Theatre, which changed its name in 1873 into the 'Great National'. In the same year a wooden pavilion was built on the site of the present 'Minerva Treatre' in Beadon Street and this was the first permanent home of the Bengali Theatre. The Emerald and Star Theatres were later on set up. In 1873 the Bengal Theatre was

started—it was renamed the “Royal Bengal Theatre” in 1890. The ‘Star’ and the ‘Minerva’ held their sway for over 30 years. In 1923 a group of people started *Art Theatre Ltd* on the boards of the Star Theatre under the management of Aparesh Mukherjee. Tagore’s *Chirakumar Sabha* was staged. Then in 1926 Sisir Bhaduri started his own theatre—the *Natya Mandir*—that continued for several years. *Seeta* was staged here.

#### (v) *Rigid casteism*

The most striking feature of Hindu Society was the institution of caste and caste rules were strictly observed in matters of marriage, diet, inter-dining etc. This casteism has been the bane of India for centuries. Even now it exists though in an attenuated form. This is another name for *apartheid* as practised in South Africa. But the former is worse than the latter, since it is mixed up with religion. In the Vedas there are four divisions—Mantra ; Brahmana ; Aranyaka ; Upanishada. The *Brahmana* was a kind of manual for *Jags* and *Jajnas*. In Sanskrit is was a neuter gender ; but the Brahman class evolved out of it is a masculine gender. The latter after taking over power declared themselves the Vedic ‘Brahmans’. This resembles the declaration of King Louis XIV of France (1638-1715) on 13 April, 1655 : “L’Etat c’est moi” (I am the State). To give religious sanction to this they interpolated in the *Rigveda* (X. 90. 12) what is known as the *Purusha Sukta* : “The Brahman was his (Purusha’s) mouth ; the Rajanya was made his arms ; the being (called) the Vaisya, was his thighs ; the Sudra sprang from his feet”. J. Muir in his “Original Sanskrit Texts” at pp. 13-14 considers this a “modern” insertion and quotes Colebrook, Max Muller and Weber in his support. Ramesh Chandra Dutt is also of the same view, namely, that it was an interpolation. This is the origin of casteism that fathers ‘apartheid’ in South Africa.

There existed a ‘caste polity’ to look after the proper observance of caste rules. Caste matters were decided by ‘caste courts’ set up by Warren Hastings in 1772. The caste Court, like Mayor’s Court, consisted of a Chief Judge or President and a number of Assessors. All the castes other than the Brahmans had grievances against the latter. Hence, no Brahman could become a member of this court. Maharaja Nabakissen (1732-97) became the Court’s first President and remained so till his death. Only



once or twice Krishnakanta Nandy alias Kantababu became the Chief Judge. Both the Presidents were non-Brahmans—one was a Kayastha, the other a Tili (Radharaman Mitra's *Calcutta Darpan*, 1980, pp. 117-18.).

(vi) *Food and dress*

1. *Food habits*

The natives were getting anglicised in food. Normally they were vegetarians, taking fish occasionally. The goat's flesh was allowed occasionally on *puja* occasions as *mahaprosad*. But goats not sacrificed before *Kali* or *Durga* were absolutely prohibited. Onions and garlies were banned. However, with the advent of the English the food habits changed. They took to meats and other forms of English food.

2. *Dress*

The ordinary dress was a country-made *dhoti* for ordinary wear at home and finer *dhoti* and *urani* for outside purposes. The winter wear was *doloi*. *Banian* or *jama* was in use and buttons and shirts almost unknown. The *banian* was made of cloth doubled up on the breast and this protected the chest from cold. The sleeves were half and convenient. Against this the *jama* generally had full sleeves. Neither the *banian* or *jama* extended below the abdomen. Elderly men usually used *baluposh*, consisting of two pieces of cloth sewn up with some cotton inside. Night-caps were very common. *Kharams* (wooden clogs) were used at home and leather "slippers" for outside purpose. *Shawls* and *doshalas* were very rare. Shawls were of Kashmir stuff and a single pair was used by all the members of the family. There were *pirans* (shirts) and full stockings in use. Thereafter came China-coats, half-stockings and shoes of various kinds along with Amritsar chawls and English wrappers. Watches and chains were almost unknown. High-priced English watches and long golden chains came and yielded place later on to Geneva watches and small chains of gold, silver, steel etc.

The official dress consisted of a loose *pyjama*, a *jora* and a *latodar pugri*. The *jora* was clumsy and it looked like an English lady's gown. All these disappeared. In their place came pantaloons, chapkans, half-chapkans, coats, surcoats, shawl-pugris, caps and *pugri* with a tail behind called 'morasis'.

(vii) *Polygamy and Suttee*1. *Suttee defined*

Polygamy was prevalent among the Hindus. Raghunandan, a contemporary of Chaitanyadev in his "*Astavinsatitwa*" (28th theories), *Suddhitatwa* (Purification theory), in the 26th chapter, forged the Rig Vedic Sloka X. 18. 7 so as to make the "front" (Agre) read as 'fire' (Agni). His idea was to prove that *suttee* i.e. the rite of widow-burning had the sanction of the Vedas. The Rigvedic verse states thus: "Let those unwidowed dames with noble husbands adorn themselves with fragrant balm and unguent/Decked with jewels, tearless, free from sorrow, *first* let the dames go up to where he lieth."<sup>57</sup> *Suttee* is the English word to denote "the rite of widow-burning i.e., the burning of the widow along with the corpse of her husband, as practised by people of certain castes among the Hindus, and eminently by the Rajputs". This is different from the Sanskrit word *Sati* meaning 'a good woman', a true wife". Thus *Suttee* denotes the act of immolation, while *Sati* the person performing the act. The application of the substantive to the suicidal act, instead of the person, is European. The proper Sanskrit term for the act is *Sahamaran* (dying together). This practice of *suttee* was abolished on 4 December, 1828 by Regulation XVII of that year promulgated by the G. G. William Bentinck—it was "a regulation for declaring the practice of *Suttee* or of burning or burying alive widows of Hindoos, illegal and punishable by the criminal courts". But the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 (Act III of 1988) wrongly uses the word 'Sati' here—it does not refer to the act, but in the act it has been made to apply to "the burning or burying alive of any widow with the body of her deceased husband or (of) any woman with the body of any of her relatives". The substitution of 'Sati' for 'suttee' is wrong. From a report published in 1822 the cases of *suttee* practised in Calcutta in 1815, 1816 and 1817 numbered 253, 289 and 441 respectively, i.e., a total of 983. In the 9 years from 1815 to 1823 the total came to 5,425. A pathetic picture was given in *Kehama* (I.12), 1809 thus

O sight of misery !  
 You cannot hear her cries . . . their sound  
 In that wild dissonance is drowned ;  
     But in her face you see  
 The supplication and the agony.

\* \*      \* \*      \* \*      \* \*

Towards the crowd in vain for pity spread,  
 They force her on, they bind her to the dead.<sup>58</sup>

### 3. *Abolition*

Prior to 1813 no steps had been taken by the Government to check or prevent the practice of *Suttee*. In that year a system of "inspection, regulation, control and report" was inaugurated. By 1823 the Supreme Court laid down that *Suttee* 'within the limits of their jurisdiction' would be treated as *murder*. The result was to quote the words of an English writer, that a widow might burn on one side of Circular Road, but not on the other ! However, this was abolished by Regulation XVII of 1828.

#### (viii) *Slavery and its abolition*

Slavery was an established institution in India from the earliest times. It existed in Calcutta upto the middle of the 19th century. During the Hindu and Muslim rule the slaves were treated humanely. In the 18th century parents sold their children owing to their inability to support them. But the number of slaves increased because of the depredations carried on by the Portuguese and the *Mughls* of Arakan. These bandits and pirates made frequent raids into Bengal's coastal villages and took away able-bodied men, women and children for sale as slaves. The *East India Chronicle* for 1758 recorded that in February 1717 the *Mughls* carried off from the southern parts of Bengal 1800-men, women and children. The sovereign of Arakan selected as his slaves one-fourth of them, the handicraftsmen. The rest was returned to the captors for sale in the market @ Rs. 20/- to 70/- each.

Slaves were openly sold in Calcutta as is evident from the advertisements appearing in the *Calcutta Gazettee*. Rewards were also offered for the capture of run-away slaves. Sir William James.

Chief Judge of the Supreme Court said in 1785 : "Hardly a man or woman exists in a corner of this populous town, who hath not at least one slave-child, either purchased or saved for a life that seldom fails to be miserable. Large boats filled with such children come down the river for open sale in Calcutta". Slaves were maltreated by their masters or mistresses. One such case related to Nasibun, a slave-girl, being maltreated by Maria Davis in 1828. The *Bengal Chronicle* for 1831 observed thus : "That slavery exists in Calcutta is a fact too notorious to be denied. Slaves of both sexes are generally purchased from the indigent Hindustanee mothers ; a young girl will bring, according to her age and usefulness from Rs. 19 upto Rs. 100". There were whipping Houses in Calcutta where slaves were taken for punishment.

The abolition of slavery in England set in a reaction in India. In 1789 export of slaves was prohibited and in 1807 slave trade was declared illegal. In 1811 import of slaves in India was stopped and in 1832 inter-district transactions in slave was made a penal offence. In 1843 slavery was abolished and declared illegal. In 1860 the Indian Penal Code—secs. 370 and 371—made the institution of slavery and dealing in slaves a punishable offence. Thus the barbarous practice came to an end.<sup>5</sup>

### VIII. *Anglo-Indian Social Relations*

It has already been noted that the Marquess of Hastings in his diary dated October 2, 1813 had recorded his contempt for the Hindoo population on the first day he reached Diamond Harbour on his way from England to Calcutta.<sup>6</sup> This racial hatred has been explained by John Stuart Mill thus : "When a country holds another in subjection, the individuals of the ruling people who resort to the foreign country to make their fortune are of all others, those who must need be held under powerful restraint. Armed with the prestige and filled with the scornful overbearingness of the conquering nation, they have the feelings inspired by the sense of absolute power without its sense of responsibility".<sup>61</sup> Syed Ghulam Husain, the author of *Seir-ul-Mutaqherin* noted in 1782 that Englishmen voided social intercourse with

the Indians. Joseph Chailley, a member of the French Chamber of Deputies visiting India in 1900-1 and in 1904-5 wrote : "English and Indians have only business relations and do not meet in the ordinary functions of society. There is, however, more than mere abstention from social relations ; there is active repugnance and hostility. Englishmen will not join volunteer corps if Indians are admitted thereto. British soldiers will assault, plunder or even kill natives. If they are prosecuted, a European jury is prone to shut its eyes to the evidence ; while if they have to be convicted, European opinion is moved to the point of addressing remonstrances to the Govt. of India. The Anglo-Indian is usually interested in India only by reason of the *income* he derives from it and the use which it is to his country."<sup>62</sup> The intercourse between the European and the Mussalman was with the princes and nobles. With the Hindus there was no evidence of extensive social intercourse. The attitude charged by the close of the 18th century from disapproval of Hindu 'superstition' and Mussalman 'bigotry' into one of contempt for an inferior and conquered people. A 'superiority complex' developed—it regarded Indian institutions bad and people corrupted and incapable of becoming better. The situation worsened further. The racial estrangement grew more with the preachings of the missionaries. "The violence of the (missionary's) denunciations confirmed the Europeans in their belief that few Indians were fit to associate with, that it was a waste of time to mix with them".<sup>63</sup>

It is also necessary to know the attitude of the Indians towards the Englishmen and their rule. The Bengali Hindus welcomed the British rule as a divine dispensation for their deliverance from the tyrannies of the Muslim rule. Raja Rammohan Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore and others gave public expression to this view. But in the end the Hindus were disillusioned. The Muslims accepted the British rule in sullen resentment but without any active protest. R. C. Dutt exposed the condition of the cultivators as going from bad to worse. Protests were voiced from the heart of the nation : "Ring out the old and ring in the new". A comparative study of the English and Indian viewpoints leads

62. Chailley, J.—Administrative problems of British India (1910). 192, 197.

63. Spear—The Nabobs 1932), 134-44.

to the conclusion arrived at by an Englishman, Blunt. According to him : The Christian teaching of human brotherhood "has given place to a pseudo-scientific doctrine of the fundamental inequalities of the human kind which has been exaggerated and made political use of to exercise white selfishness and white exclusiveness and to reinforce the white man's pretension of rightful dominion over the non-white world at large".<sup>64</sup>

64. Blunt, W. S—India under Ripon—A private Diary (1901), 233.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE CALCUTTANS

To furnish a barren room is one thing. To continue to crowd in furniture until the foundation buckles in is quite another. To have failed to solve the problem of producing goods would have been to continue man in his oldest and most grievous misfortune. But to fail to see that we have solved it and to fail to proceed thence to the next task would be fully as tragic.

— J. K. Galbraith, *The affluent society* (1958) 277

#### I. *Three economic factors in the British conquest*

The British conquest of India had been influenced by certain economic reasons as already noted. Three economic factors guided them. In the *first* place, a transfer of English trade from the Archipelago of the East Indies to India took place. *Secondly*, the English anticipated the approaching disintegration of the Mughal empire and changed the strategy of their trade. Thus the year 1702 saw the union of the two companies in England with one Charter. The United East India Company, as the Union was called, then emerged as a powerful and adventurous corporation backed by the Home Government, with the authority to make war and peace in India. Previously they followed a cautious policy of "quiet trading" in the belief that the "keeping of soldiers beggars a nation". They now switched over to the policy of the "wise Dutch"—they began to run their factories so as to make them pay their own expenses and to defend themselves against aggression by means of their fortification and acquisition of adjacent hinterland. In this way the company was on the road to become, in the words of Caraccioli, "the most formidable commercial republic known in the world since the demolition of Carthage".

In 1685 the English Company obtained permission of King James II to fit out and send a fleet for capture, plunder and des-

truction of all Indian ships. The English did not draw a line between defence, aggression and piracy in India. Its effect may be described in the words of Bolts thus : "The fleet on the Malabar Coast made immense booty at sea from indiscriminately plundering all Indian merchantships ; whilst the troops in Bengal, under the command of Mr. Job Charnock, the Company Chief factor at Hooghly experienced many changes of fortune".<sup>2</sup> Sir John Child, the Company's Governor at Bombay prolonged this 'work' until 1690. But the Company had to suffer for this aggressive policy. From Bengal they were expelled in 1688 by Aurangzeb's Viceroy. As a result the policy of the mailed fist had to be abandoned for the time being. Very soon both parties came to terms. Thus in 1690 Job Charnock acquired by negotiation Sutanuti, Govindpur and Kalkatah on a strategic site on the eastern bank of the Hooghly. From this place the English could ward off the Marathas and at the same time to fight their European rivals as well as the Nawab of Bengal. Here was built the second city of the British empire-Calcutta—and in 1700 the English resorted more "to the use of the military" than bribery and presents.

*Thirdly*, in 1692 the East India Company got their customs duties, transit duties and other charges commuted into an annual lump sum of Rs. 3000 only. In the words of the English Company in 1678 : "The Company have by grants, firmans and mutual stipulations obtained very great privileges and immunities in most parts of India, not only beyond any other nations trading thither, but even beyond the natives themselves".

## II. *India's economic decline in stages*

The economic decline began from the mid-17th century when the English (1652) and the Dutch (1665) obtained from Shah Jahan exemption from tolls, and reduction of customs duties, along with other privileges not enjoyed by the Indians and at the same time they could enforce a system of *Cartasses* or passes for the Indian ships en route. The year 1716 saw an extraordinary reduction of customs duties by a firman from Farrukhsiyar and this preferential treatment greatly helped the transfer of foreign and inland trade from both Indian and Dutch hands



to the English. The year 1700 witnessed the prohibition of the use of Asiatic silks as well as printed and dyed calicoes, through these could be imported for re-exportation. This was followed in 1720 by the prohibition, with certain exceptions, of the wear and use of *Calicoes* dyed or printed in England. Protective duties for the English weaving industry against Indian products were gradually raised to about 80% in the subsequent decades.

The next stage was set by the grant of *Dewani* of Bengal, Behar and Orissa to the English (1765). This enabled the English to have tremendous political and economic power that was utilised to discourage the native handicrafts and to oust the Indians, Dutch, French and Danish factories and merchants from trading in salt, betelnut, tobacco and foodgrains. In 1769 the E.I. Company passed an arbitrary order prohibiting the home-work of the silk weavers and forced their labour in their factories. Besides, weavers were forbidden to work for others until the English Company's orders were completed. Thereafter they were compelled to deliver their goods at the price dictated by the Company's agents. The English ousted the French (1769) and Dutch (1759) traders from the field. The English system of monopoly, coercion and exaction has been described by Bolts thus : "The whole inland trade of the country and that of the Company's investment for Europe has been one of continued scene of oppression, the baneful effects of which are severely felt by every weaver and manufacturer in the country, every article produced being made a monopoly in which the English with their *Banyans* and black *Gomastas* arbitrarily decide what quantities of goods each manufacturer shall deliver, and the prices he shall receive for them".<sup>4</sup> This continued till 1784, when Pitt's India Act placed the Company's administration under the Crown control and compelled some reforms. In a minute of 1789 it was stated that one-third of the Company's territory had been reduced to a jungle infested by wild beasts.

This came another stage with Cornwallis, who created *zamindars* on the analogy of the landlords of Great Britain. But the class of which they were born was, in the words of the Chronicler, Ghulam Hussain Khan, "refractory, untrustworthy, incorrigible

4. Bolts, op. cit., 121-24.

and accustomed to infest the highways, torment the subjects, ruin the revenue and distress the Government". This landed autocracy was to help the British Raj as allies. Since the Permanent Settlement (1793) as Cornwallis's measure was called, the economic condition of the agriculturalists deteriorated greatly. Handicrafts also declined. Indian calicoes and silks could sell in England at a price 50 to 60 per cent lower than the price of the British fabrics. Riots and tumults among the British weavers, led to the protection of the woollen and silk manufactures by Acts of Parliament in 1813—in that year the duties against Indian piecegoods, were raised to  $78\frac{1}{3}$  per cent *ad velorem* on Calicoes and  $31\frac{1}{3}$  per cent on Muslins, British cloth goods began to come to India.

Another stage came with the termination of the Company monopoly by the Charter Act of 1813. The 1813 Act permitted private traders or free merchants to trade under special licence. This was followed by the Charter Act of 1833, which abolished the mercantile character of the East India Company. The Company had closed most of their factories of this time. This paved the way for the import of private capital and enterprise to exploit the resources of India, that had been "reduced from the state of manufacturing to that of an agricultural country". The British interest was now focussed on the export of Indian raw materials such as cotton, silk, hides, oil seeds, dye stuffs and jute for the British manufacturers. The year 1813 witnessed the final conversion of India from the industrial workshop of the world to its richest raw material country. Besides, various discriminatory import duties were imposed on non-British Indian ships. In 1814 a British Act was passed and under it no ship could enter London that had not on board  $\frac{3}{5}$  crew of British mariners. In the beginning of the 19th century Calcutta was one of the major ship-building centres—between 1781 and 1813, 181 vessels were built here.<sup>5</sup> But the industry declined because of discriminatory legislation.<sup>6</sup>

In this connection one must note the proverbial Indian poverty.

5. Carey, W. H.—The good old days of the Hon'ble John Company 11, 15.

6. Mukherjee, R. K.—"Trade and Industry" in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. 8 at 775-81.

R. C. Dutt<sup>7</sup> thinks that it had been due to the so-called "Home charges". And these charges consisted mainly of disbursements in England on account of (1) interest on debt incurred for imperial expansion in and outside India, (2) railways, the British investors in which had been guaranteed an annuity payable in England, and (3) civil and military charges including payments to the Imperial exchequer, the Secretary of State's establishment, pensions etc. According to him, "the annual remittance of 17 millions for Home charges added to the remittance made by European officers employed in India, represent nearly one-half of the nett revenues of India". Moreover, the debt was not morally due from India; the railway promoters had undertaken extravagant expenditure which could have been avoided; and as regards civil and military expenditure, "it is a mean policy to make India alone pay". The Home charges were born in sin. As observed by Griffith:<sup>8</sup> "the genesis of the 'drain' (of Indian wealth to England) is to be found mainly in the application of the territorial revenues of the company to the provision of their investment. In other words, surplus revenue was used for the purchase as goods for export to England. India thus obtained neither goods nor bullion nor services in return for them. This system was brought to an end in 1813, when the territorial and commercial revenues of the Company were separated". But the same effect was produced by other means as noted above and the annual drain grew by leaps and bounds from 3½ millions in 1857 to 17 millions in 1901-2.<sup>9</sup>

The Indian economy during 1905-47 may be characterised as one of "guided underdevelopment".<sup>10</sup> Its main result had been to establish "a raw material-biased export economy in India". The Annual Report on the Moral and Material Progress of India, 1921 rightly pointed out that the British Indian Government's attempts to encourage Indian industries "were effectively discouraged from Whitehall". There was, however a basic change after 1922. Even then the positive impact of the new policy was partly neutralised by the Imperial Preference. Moreover, the new policy came too

7. Dutt, R. C.—*The Economic history of India*, 358-9, 604-5, 613.

8. Griffith, P.—*The British impact on India* (1952), 400.

9. Majumdar, R. C.—*History & Culture*, vol. 9 at 1151.

10. Bose, A.—"Foreign capital in V. B. Singh, (ed)'s *Economic history of India (1857-1956)* 1963.

late, because India's population explosion had already outstripped the rate of increase in agricultural output. At the time of transfer of power the country had a peculiar pattern of economic organisation. It was marked by three features—(i) a limited development of modern industry ; (ii) the growth of an export sector ; and (iii) some increase in agricultural output as compared to the mid-19th century level. The first was mainly based on the growth of an unskilled or semi-skilled labour force. The second being isolated from the rest of the economy stimulated no growth outside its limits, while the third operated within the framework of the traditional techniques and organisation. Hence, the only conclusion arrived at is that "India in the mid-20th century was a typical case of economic backwardness".<sup>11</sup>

### III. *The 'Capital' device to exploit*

British imperialism applied three types of capital for the exploitation of India.<sup>12</sup> Three periods are noticeable in its history—(1) the period of Merchant capital (1690-1813), represented by the East India Company ; (2) the period of Industrial capital (1814-1918) ; and (3) the period of Finance Capital (1919-1947). These are treated below :

#### A. *The Merchant Capital*

##### 1. *Monopoly*

The East India Company trading in India was the monopolist Company of Merchant capital, engaged in making a profit by means of a monopoly trade in the goods and products of an overseas country. The idea was not a hunt for a market for British manufacturers, but the endeavour to secure a supply of the products of India and the East Indies, especially spices, cotton and silk goods, that found a ready market in England and Europe and could thus yield a rich profit on each expectation. The problem facing the Company, however, was that it was to offer India something in exchange for the goods to be secured from her. England at the time could offer only woollen goods that were of no use in India. Hence precious metals were taken out to buy

the goods in India. As observed by Knowles : "A few luxury articles for the courts, lead, copper, quicksilver and tin, coral, gold and ivory were the only commodities except silver that was taken out. . . The English trade with India was really a chase to find something that India will be willing to take and the silver obtained by the sale of the slaves in the West Indies and Spanish America was all-important in this connection".<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly at its commencement the East India Company was given a special authorisation to export an annual value of £ 30,000 in silver, gold and foreign coin. But this was repugnant to Mercantile capitalism, which aimed at securing a net favourable balance of trade in the shape of an influx of precious metals or increase of real wealth. The company was concerned to secure Indian goods for little or no payment. One of the devices adopted was a system of round-about trade, that is, to utilise the plunder from the colonies in Africa and America to meet the costs in India. By the middle of the 18th century dominion began to be established in India and methods of power were used to secure the maximum goods for the minimum payment. The margin between trade and plunder became thin. The Nawab of Bengal in his Memorandum to the English Governor in May 1762 thus complained against the Company's agents : "They forcibly take away the goods and commodities of the ryots, merchants etc. for a fourth part of their value ; and by ways of violence and oppression they oblige (them) to give Rs. 5 for goods worth but one rupee". That this "trade" was more plunder than trade is evident from Bolts' observations : "The English, with their Banyans and black Gomostas, arbitrarily decide what quantities of goods each manufacturer shall deliver and the prices he shall receive for them. The assent of the poor weaver is in general not deemed necessary ; for the Gomostahs, when employed on the company's investment, frequently make them sign what they please ; and upon the weavers refusing to take the money offered they have been tied in their girdles and sent away with a flogging. The roguery practised is beyond imagination ; but all terminates in defrauding the poor weaver ; for the prices, which the Company's Gomostahs and in confederacy with

13. Knowles, L.C.A.—Economic Development of the Overseas Empire. 73-4.

them the Jachendars (examiners of fabrics) fix upon the goods are all at least 15 per cent and some even 40 per cent less than the goods so manufactured would sell in the public bazar upon free sale".<sup>14</sup>

## 2. *Free trade*

In the mid-18th century England was mainly agricultural. The commercial basis had been laid and she needed accumulation of capital for industrial revolution. The Bank of England established in 1694 could not itself provide the primary accumulation of capital. For more than 60 years since its foundation its smallest note had been for £ 20, a note too large for circulation. With the arrival of the Bengal silver, the mass of money increased. At once in 1759 the Bank issued £ 10 and 15 notes. Plassey was fought in 1757 and in its wake came the rapidity of changes. In 1760 the flying shuttle appeared and coal began to replace wood in smelting. In 1764 Hargreaves invented the spinning jenny, in 1776 Crompton contrived the mule, in 1785 Cartwright patented the powerloom. But the chief of all was the invention of the steam engine by Watt in 1768. Invention in themselves are passive—they need a sufficient store of force to set them working. And this store must always take the shape of money in motion. Before the influx of the Indian treasure and the expansion of credit that came afterwards no force sufficient for the purpose existed. "From 1694 to Plassey (1757) the growth had been relatively slow; between 1760 and 1815 (it) was very rapid and prodigious".<sup>15</sup> The spoliation of India was thus the hidden source of accumulation that made possible the Industrial Revolution in England.

This brought in a demand for outlets for the manufactured goods. And a necessity was felt to turn mercantile capitalism to free-trade capitalism. The new needs required the creation of a *free market* in India in place of the former *monopoly*. It became necessary to transfer India from an exporter of cotton goods into an importer of cotton goods. This offensive was launched in 1776 by Adam Smith, the father of the free-trade manufacturing capi-

14. Bolts, W.—*Considerations on India Affairs* (1772), 191-4.

15. Adams, B.—*The law of civilisation and decay*, 259-60.

talism in his "Wealth of Nations": "As *sovereigns*, their (Company's) interest is exactly the same with that of the country they govern (India). As *merchants* their interest is directly opposite to that interest".<sup>16</sup> To solve the problem certain measures were taken. *First* came in 1784 Pitt's India Act establishing direct control by the State. However, Pitt passed from his early moves towards free trade to the high protectionist system of the French wards. *Second*, Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Land Settlement in Bengal so as to end the former arbitrary increases of land revenue. The new landlord class was created as the social basis of British rule. All these measures aimed at reforms. But in reality they cleared the ground for the more scientific exploitation of India in the interest of the capitalist class. The stage was now set for exploitation by industrial capital.

### B. *The Industrial Capital*

In 1813 the new stage of industrial capitalist exploitation of India started. Prior to it trade with India had been relatively small. The proceedings, of the Parliamentary enquiry of 1813 showed that the aim of the Company was now the development of India as a market for the rising British machine industry. At the time of this enquiry the duties on the import of Indian Calicoes into Britain were 78%. Without this protection the British cotton industry could not have developed in its early stages. The situation may be described in the words of Wilson thus: "It was stated in evidence (in 1813) that the Cotton and Silk goods of India upto the period could be sold for a profit in the British market at a price from 50% to 60% lower than those fabricated in England. It consequently became necessary to protect the latter by duties of 70% and 80% on their value of positive prohibition. Had this not been the case, the mills of Paisley and Manchester would have been stopped in their outset, and could scarcely have been again set in motion, even by the power of steam. They were created by the sacrifice of the Indian manufacture".<sup>17</sup>

This tariff discrimination against Indian manufacturers to build up the British textile industry was carried on in the first half of the 19th century. In the Parliamentary enquiry of 1840

16. Smith, A.—Wealth of Nations, Bk. IV, chap. vii.

17. Wilson, H. H.—History of British India, vol. 1, 385.

it was revealed that while British cotton and silk goods imported into India paid a duty of 3½% and woollen goods 2%, Indian cotton goods imported into British paid 10%, silk goods 20% and woollen goods 30%. Between 1815 and 1832 the value of Indian cotton goods imported into India rose from £ 26,000 to £ 4,00,000 or an increase of 16 times. By 1850 India which had for centuries exported cotton goods to the whole world, was importing one-fourth of all British cotton exports, while machine—made cotton goods from England ruined the weavers, machine—made twist ruined the spinners. Between 1818 and 1836, the export of cotton twist from England to India rose 5,200 times.

The industrial capitalist had defined their policy, namely, to make India the agricultural colony of British Capitalism, supplying raw materials and buying manufactured goods. And this was set out as the objective by the President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Thomas Barley, who in his evidence to the 1840 Parliamentary Enquiry said: "The whole question with respect to our Indian trade is whether they can pay us, by the products of their soil, for what we are prepared to send out as manufactures". And India supplied, as pointed out by Knowles, the essential raw materials, viz, hides, oil, dyes, jute and cotton required for the industrial revolution in England and at the same time afforded a growing market for English manufactures of iron and cotton.<sup>18</sup>

In 1833 slavery was abolished in the West Indies and a new stage set in. The Englishmen were permitted to acquire land and set up as planters in India. The new plantation system was nothing but thinly veiled slavery. The slave drivers from the West Indies came and started plantation in this country. The horrors were exposed by the Indigo Commission of 1860. It may be noted that the export of raw materials leapt up after 1833. Even the export of food-grains rose—rice and wheat from £ 8,58,000 in 1849 to £ 3.8 million by 1858, £ 7.9 million by 1877, £ 9.3 million by 1901 and £ 19.3 million in 1914, or an increase of 22 times over. As a result the famines increased—7 famines in the first half of the 19th century with 1½ million deaths and 24 famines in the second half of the 19th century with 20 million deaths. In 1878 a Famine Commission was appointed and it

18. Knowles, op. cit., 305.



observed in its Report (1880) thus : "At the root of the poverty of the people of India lies the unfortunate circumstance that agriculture forms almost the sole occupation of the mass of the population. No remedy for the present evils can be complete which does not include the introduction of a diversity of occupations, through which the surplus population may be drawn from agricultural pursuits and led to find the means of subsistence in manufactures or some such employments".

This is the judgment of Industrial Capital on its own hand-work in India.

### C : *The Finance Capital*

With the 20th century a new change had been operating, but the first world war supervened. In the political field the 1917 Declaration promised the new goal of "the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of India". In the economic sphere the old *laissezfaire* hostility to Indian industrial development yielded place to a new vision of a modern industrialised country under the fostering care of the British rule and with the aid of British capital. And this change was the transition from the free-trade capitalist stage to Finance—Capital and its rule in India. It was in 1905 that Lord Curzon established the new Department of Commerce and Industry.

The "tribute" as it was called upto the mid-19th century included the "home charges" and private remittance to England. It grew more rapidly alongside a relative decline in trade. A table showing the growth of tribute from India to England is given below (in £ million) :<sup>19</sup>

	1851	1901	1913-14	1933-34
(i) Home charges	2.5	17.3	19.4	27.5
(ii) Excess of Indian exports	3.3	11.0	14.2	69.7

The trade relations i.e. (ii) may be shown in 5-year periods thus :

	1851-55	1877-1907	1909-10 to 1913-4	1931-32 to 1935-36
Excess of Indian exports	4.3	15.3	22.5	59.2

The above table shows the increase of tribute and this conceals the real emergence of new forms of exploitation. And this exploitation developed out of the conditions of the free-trade 19th century capitalism and grew into the finance-capitalist exploitation of the 20th century. The former compelled a two-fold development. *First*, it was necessary to replace the Company by the Crown take-over representing the British capitalist class. *Second*, to throw India open to commercial penetration became a necessity. To this end it became essential to build a network of railroads, to develop roads and irrigations, to introduce the electric telegraph and a uniform postal system and the like. All this meant that after a century of neglect of the most elementary functions of government in respect of public works, the needs of exploitation now compelled a beginning to be made and aimed at the commercial and strategic needs of foreign penetration on onerous financial terms. This imperialist expansion was spoken of as the export of capital. But the amount of actual export of capital was very small. It was only £ 22.5 million—the excess of exports replaced by an excess of imports—over 1856-62 while in 1914 it became £ 500 million. Thus the British capital invested in India was in reality first raised in India from the plunder of the Indian people and then written down as debt of India to Britain, on which the former had to pay interest and dividends. The nucleus of British investments in India was the Public Debt. When the British Government took over in 1858 the took over a debt of £ 70 million from the East India Company. This, according to Indian writers, meant in reality that the company had withdrawn in tribute from India over £ 150 million, in addition to the charges for the cost of wars waged by Britain outside India in Afghanistan, China and other countries. There was thus a balance in favour of India. However, this did not prevent the debt being taken over and rapidly increased.

The Public Debt in the hands of the British Government doubled in 18 years from £ 70 million to £ 140 million. By 1900 it became £ 224 million. By 1913 it totalled £ 274 million. By 1939 on the eve of the Second World War it came to Rs. 11,790 million (£ 884.2 million) divided into Indian debt of Rs. 7,090 million (£ 532.4 million) and sterling debt in England of Rs. 4,691 million (£ 351.8 million). This shows that in about three-quarters of a century of British direct rule the

debt multiplied more than 12 times. Paish read a paper before the Royal Statistical Society in 1911, in which he estimated the total of British Capital investments in India and Ceylon at £ 365 million—the items of investment being Govt. and Municipal, Railways, Plantations (tea, coffee, rubber), Tramways, Mines, Banks, Oil, Commercial and Industrial, Finance, Land and Investment and miscellaneous.<sup>20</sup> It is clear from this that 97% had been invested in purposes auxiliary to the commercial penetration.

The finance—capitalist exploitation of India had become the dominant character in the 20th century. By 1929 the British capital investments in India totalled £ 573 million and more probably £ 700 million. The annual tribute from India to Britain and abroad during 1921-22 as been estimated by Shah and Khambata at Rs. 2,198.8 million i.e. £ 146.5.<sup>21</sup> The latest estimate (1945) has been made by Rosinger at £ 135 million.<sup>22</sup> Hence, the total annual tribute may be taken to be in the neighbourhood of £ 135 to £ 150 million. With the first world war industrialisation was officially set out as the aim in the economic field. The new policy was proclaimed by the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge in 1915: "A definite and self-conscious policy of improving the industrial capabilities of India will have to be pursued after the war". Following this the Indian Industrial Commission was appointed in 1916 and it reported in the same vein. So did the Montagu-Chelmsford Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms in 1918: "On all grounds a forward policy in industrial development is urgently called for, not merely to give India economic stability, but to satisfy the aspirations of her people". And the method adopted to carry out the change of policy was the development of a protective tariff system. But the tariff system was soon transformed into a system of Imperial Preference for assisting British industry. Thus there was a setback to industrialisation. In fact India shows the typical invested economic development of a dependent colonial country. The real picture on

20. Paish, G—*Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. LXXIV, Part—I, Jan. 2, 1911 at 186.

21. Shah, K. T/Khambata, K. J—*Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India* (1924).

22. *Hindustan Standard*, Calcutta, July 5, 1985: "Independence for Colonial Asia—the cost to the Western world".

the eve of the Second World War was one of "de-industrialisation", that is, the decline of the old handicraft industry without the compensating advance of modern industry. Then came the "managing-agency" system by which the profit passes not to the shareholders but to the managing agency. Moreover, the Bombay Industrial Economic Enquiry Committee pointed out in 1940 the growing menace of the "India Limiteds". During 1943-44 the number of such companies registered was 108. In the words of Wadia and Merchant: "Not only do they compete with large-scale industries but they also threaten our (Indian) small-scale industries".<sup>23</sup> India came out of the World War much poorer than she was. The opportunity of building Indian economy was lost. And because of the war-time strain she faced a grave industrial situation. The legacy of preventing India's industrial growth in the interests of British finance was carried forward into the post-war period in new forms, namely, the joint floatation of Indo-British concerns. And then the British quitted India.

#### IV. *The Calcutta economy*

(a) "*Plassey plunder*"<sup>24</sup>—It has been said that after Plassey (1757) the world was let loose upon the English Company's servants in India and they were let loose upon the world with all powers that despotism could give. Clive set the ball rolling. He substituted easy wealth for the slow return of commerce. "Money! Money! and no time to be lost."<sup>25</sup> Clive came to India as a pauper and when he left for England, he had amassed Rs. 25 lakhs and his income from the zamindari properties in Bengal amounted to Rs. 2.70 lakhs a year. On his own admission he saved Rs. 10 lakhs in two years.<sup>26</sup> The evil example set by him was only too faithfully followed. As is well said: "When generals must have their thousands, subalterns will scuffle for hundreds".<sup>27</sup> The sums distributed by the princes and people of Bengal from 1757 to 1766 to individual Englishmen has been estimated at Rs. 50 million (1 current rupee = 25).<sup>28</sup> The peak period of gifts

and presents to Englishmen in power extended from 1757 to 1766, but clandestine receipt of presents continued even after 1768. And the curve fell precipitately after October, 1774 with the arrival of Clavering, Monson and Francis. However, the spirit of the E.I. Company's Civil Service did not change. Every one of the 252 covenanted servants—the number given in a letter to the court dated 25 November, 1780—aspired after the rapid acquisition of wealth. Barwell amassed Rs. 80 lakhs.

Private trade of the Company's servants was a source of wealth. The *gomastas* or Indian agents intercepted much of their ill-gotten wealth. This lasted from 1757 to 1768 and lingered on till 1771. Sykes, the Resident at the Murshidabad Durbar for two years amassed Rs. 12 or 13 lakhs in *Salamees* and farms. Lucrative, collusive contracts also formed one of the important sources. Three charges—an opium contract to Stephen Sullivan, bullock contracts to Charles—Croftes and Sir Charles Blunt and a contract to John Belli for the supply of stores and provisions for the garrison of Fort William—were levelled against Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General in the Impeachment proceedings. Marx observed on this thus : "His favourites received contracts under conditions whereby they cleverer than alchemists made gold out of nothing. Great fortunes sprang up like mushrooms in a day ; primitive accumulations went on without the advance of a shilling. Sullivan sold his contract for £ 40,000 to Binn, And Binn sold it the same day for £ 60,000 and the ultimate purchaser also made enormous gain".<sup>29</sup>

(b) *Drain of wealth*—The primary producers of cotton piece goods were very much affected by the eagerness of the British Chiefs or Residents in charge of investment to secure their perquisites. It has been estimated that the company paid the weaver 20 to 30 per cent less than the market price for his cloth. To this must be added the perquisites of these people. William Rooke, a member of the Board of Trade, against whom suits were instituted in England, argued that "perquisites were distributed from the first institution of the Board". His official salary was Rs. 14,400 and Cornwallis later raised the salary attached to the office to Rs. 58,000.<sup>30</sup> Then there were the Free Merchants—

29. Marx—*Capital*, vol. I, 277, (Dona Torr).

30. Furber—*John Company at work*, App. A.

they enjoyed the Company's protection within the limits of the charter subject to the restrictions imposed on the Company's servants in their private trade. John Bebb has commented on their role thus : "From a country subject as this is to a far distant nation, there is a continual unavoidable drain to this prejudice. This drain is increased by these men. Their fortunes, as soon as they acquire any are removed to Europe and in so much increased the drain to this country".<sup>31</sup>

The Company's covenants recognised their servants' right of private trade. The "country" trade was open to them in all its branches. Since they could not devote more time to their trade, they were allowed as a compensation 2½ per cent commission on land revenue. Their "privilege" trade amounted to 750 tons at Rs. 3 thousand a ton i.e. worth Rs. 22,50,000. This trade was of the company's servants or of the British Free Merchants. The great age of private trade lasted from 1768 to 1785. Thereafter exports of indigo to Europe and of opium to Malay and China became profitable. In 1800 the export of indigo was 40,000 maunds. In 1815 this came to 1,20,000 maunds. The shipping trade was noticeable also. The *Non-such* of 500 tons was launched in Calcutta in 1781. Between 1781 and 1803, 56 ships and 43 sloops were constructed, totalling 30,080 tons. These ships were used in coastal trade and in trade with "Foreign Asia". It may be noted that in 1789 there were in Canton 40 ships belonging to British subjects residing in India. The practice of sending silver to China from Bengal commenced as early as 1757. In the sixties Rs. 24 lakhs of yen was sent for clandestine opium trade—by the seventies, this came to Rs. 20 lakhs a year. The tribute paid to Shah Alam from 1756 to 1772 amounted to a drain of Rs. 20 million.

### (c) *Great native families*

Although the country had been plundered, this was not an unmixed evil. A class of native people amassed huge fortunes by serving the English as dewans, banians, brokers and managers. They were mostly of the *Subarnabanik* caste. Some may be mentioned. Matilal Sil (1792-1854) started as a dealer in empty bottles and corks and acquired a substantial fortune thereby. This

31. Proceedings of Board of Trade dated December, 1788.

attracted the notice of the European trading community and in 1820 he was appointed a banian by an English trader. In course of time he became a banian of 10 or 12 British firms. Subsequently he purchased 12 or 12 ships, carrying his own goods. He purchased properties and became a big zamindar. He donated large sums of money for the Calcutta Medical College and hospitals too. The next was Ramdulal De Sarkar (1752-1825). By dint of his efforts he became the sole representative of American business houses in Bengal and was known as Bengal's "Rothschild". At death he left a fortune worth a crore and 23 lakhs of rupees.<sup>32</sup> Some Calcuttans served as Dewans, under the Company's Residents, of Salt golahs, opium factories and the like. Thus Gopee Mohun Tagore is reported in a news item dated September, 1818 that he "left a fortune of eighty lakhs of rupees". The Calcutta *Gazette* dated 12 April, 1792 reports the death of "Cossinant Baboo" (Dewan Kashinath Mitra) who built a *ghat* on the Ganges known as Kasi Mitter's ghat. It was also stated that "Cossinant Babu died worth upwards of Rs. 60 lakhs".<sup>33</sup>

(d) *The Burrabazar perspective*

In the case of *Charles Blancey v. Khetturpal Sircar*, 1820 some names of cotton merchants in Burrabazar (1816-17) appear. There are 59 names of whom 23 are Bengali, represented by such titles as Pauls, Seths, Coondoos, Mullicks and Seals. In 1844 it is found that the permanent residents of Burrabazar were not the upcountry bankers and merchants. They had their *kothees* here. The central bazar was not a residential area. Most of the merchants from Rajputana lived very abstemiously in their business premises. In the residential part of Burrabazar many houses were owned by men from Bangladesh (East Bengal), who lived on the eastern bank of the Ganges (the Hooghly) so as to have daily ablution in the sacred river every morning and perform other ceremonial acts of piety. The Seths and Bysacks whose ancestors came first to Sutanuti still lived in that part of Burrabazar. Their big houses with temples stand on both sides of the road leading to Jaganaath ghat. About 1892 Harrison Road (now Mahatma Gandhi Road) was constructed—it runs from the Gan-

32. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, 353-55.

33. Roy, B. V., *op. cit.*, 110.

ges to Sealdah. The Marwari merchants purchased land on both sides of the Road and constructed multi-storied residential houses with shops on the ground floor and first floor—a pattern which became very popular in Burrabazar.<sup>34</sup>

The Burrabazar existed prior to the advent of Job Charnock. It is a mart tailed on to the north of the Chinabazar (China town) and occupied by Merchants from all parts of the East. In the words of Grant the Burrabazar in 1858 may be described thus :

“Here, above and below may be seen the jewels, of Golkanda and Bundelkhand, the Shawls of Cashmere, the broad cloths of England, silks of Murshidabad and Benaras, Muslims of Dacca, Calicoes, ginghams, chintzes and beads of Coromandel, firs and fruits of Canbul, silk fabrics and brocades of Persia, spices and myrrh for Ceylon, spice islands and Arabia, shells from the eastern coast and straits, drugs, dried fruit and sweetmeats from Arabia and Turkey, cows tails from Tibet and ivory from Ceylon ; a great portion of these and various other articles are either sold or bought by natives from the countries where they are obtained who together with visitors, travellers and beggars form a diversified group of Persians, Arabs, Jews, Marwarees, Armenians, Madrascées, Sikhs, Turks, Parsees, Chinese. Burmese and Bengalees”.<sup>35</sup>

(e) *A city of shopkeepers*

Napoleon is reported to have ridiculed the English as “a nation of shopkeepers”. William Wordsworth expressed the idea in his verse : “The world is too much with us ; late and soon/Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers”. Now, the expression ‘getting and spending’ means economic life as led by shopkeepers, since economics deals with man in his wealth-getting and wealth-spending activities. Calcutta may rightly be described as ‘a city of shop-keepers’ in this sense. And this was the view of Sumbho Chunder Mookerjee in *Mookherjee’s Magazine* (1861) : “Calcutta in the 18th century was a new city. The most respectable of its inhabitants were merchants”. First mention may be made of the legal profession in Calcutta. The legal

34. Sinha, op. cit., III, 163-5.

35. Grant, *Calcutta Anglo-Indian Sketch* (2nd edn, 1883).



practitioners in those days found their profession profitable. Thus H.E.A. Cotton in his *Memories of the Supreme Court 1774-1862* used the expression "retired with a fortune" in respect of law-years. Similarly *Hickey's Bengal Gazette* dated 2 December, 1790 mentioned the Attorney Samuel Tolfrey acting as undersheriff to Macrabie from 1775 as retired "with a fortune of Rs. 3 lakhs." Thomas Farrer stood first on the roll of advocates of the Supreme Court, having been admitted on the opening day, October 22, 1774. He left a fortune of £ 60,000 (Rs. 6 lakhs). According to Miss Sophia Goldbourne in her *Hartley House* (1789), the fees of lawyers were enormous—two pounds for a single question; four pounds for a letter of 3 lines; the fee for making a will was in proportion to its length.

Dr. Rowland Jackson was a well-known Doctor in Calcutta in the later end of the 18th century. He was on the Company's service on Rs. 600 a month plus Rs. 200 as house-allowance. Goldbourne has recorded the fees of the doctors thus: one gold mohur (£ 2) for a visit in a palanquin; numerous extras such as a rupee for a Bolus; a rupee for an ounce of salts and Rs. 3 for an ounce of bark. In this light one had to ruin one's fortune to preserve one's health. The Calcutta Medical College was established in 1835 and its first Superintendent was A. J. Bramley appointed on a salary of Rs. 1200 a month plus allowance worth Rs. 300 or Rs. 400. In contrast the native doctors in hospitals in Calcutta began on a pay of Rs. 20 a month. The first four Bengali students who passed out of the Medical College were recommended for Government Service on a monthly pay of Rs. 100 each, namely, Umacharan Sett, Dwarkanath Gupta, Rajkristo Dey and Nabin Chandra Mitra. The first student-Syama Charan Dutt was later declared to have passed. Englishmen in those days carried on other professions as well. They were jurymen. Besides, they were engaged in different trades as coach-making, watch-making, tavern-keeping, tailoring, wine-dealing, shoe-making, tanning, hair-dressing and the like.<sup>36</sup>

(f) The various avenues of livelihood.

The Calcuttans of the soil who suffered from poverty could not take to business and trade. The journal *Somprakash* in its

36. Ray, B. V. *op. cit.*, 100-9, 113-16.

issue 9th Bhadra, 1292, B. S. (26 August, 1885) mentions different avenues of livelihood open to the Calcuttans as follows :

1. The pretty businessmen and tradesmen—this class included godown-keepers, wholesalers, shopkeepers hawkers, money and grain-lenders.
2. Landed property-owners including Zamindars, Putnidars, Talukdars, Jotedars, Cultivators and Brahmottar-holders.
3. Service-holders including judges of High Courts, porters, coolies, etc.
4. Followers of caste-professions—this class included weavers, washermen, blacksmiths, carpenters etc.
5. Sycophants, beggars, hangers-on etc.
6. Practitioners of despicable professions, e.g. converts to another religion, acceptors of large dowries etc.
7. Sellers of talents, e.g., enjoyers of royalties of literacy and scientific works etc.<sup>37</sup>

(g) *Prices and wages*

An issue of the *Calcutta Gazette* of 1817 listed prices of commodities as follows :

*Per rupee*

Wheat—30 seers ; flour—12 seers ; butter—1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> to 34 chittacks ; cow ghee—30 to 38 chittacks ; buffalo ghee—32 chittacks ; cheese—8 to 16 chittacks ; sugar—4 to 6 seers ; milk—14 seers ; salt—10 seers ; Patna gram (boot)—18 to 22 seers ; rice—11 to 44 seers.

*Per maund—*

Biscuits—4 to 6 rupees ; potatoes—2 to 4 rupees ; county oil—Rs. 8-12-0 ; cocoanut oil—Rs. 13-8-0

*Per pair*

Geese—Rs. 1-12-0 to Rs. 2-8-0 ; ducks—Rs. 3 ; pigeons—annas three ; rabbits—Rs. 1-12-0 ; Chittagang fowls—Rs. 1-4-0 to Rs. 1-12-0 ; fowls—3 to 10 per rupee ; kids—2 as to Rs. 1 each ; mutton—Rs. 1 per quarter ; eggs—5 as per cor.

37. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, 353, 363-64, 372.

*Fish per seer*

Rowe (Rohi) and Cutlah—4 to 5 as : Bectie (Vetki)—5 as ; Quoye (Koi) and Sowle (shole)—2 as ; Tangrah and Chunnah—1 to 1½ as ; Mango fish—16 per rupee.

*Vegetable per rupee*

Salad—24 bundles ; turnips—9 bundles ; carrots—17 bundles ; celery—15 bundles ; limes—350.

*Firewood*

Soondry logs—Rs. 14 per 100 mds ; split soondry—5½ mds per rupee.<sup>38</sup> In 1856 coarse rice was sold at Re. 1-10-0 to Re. 1-12-0 per maund. Medium quality rice cost Rs. 2 a maund. Fuel sold at 2½ mds a rupee. Shopkeepers were reported to be cheating customers on weight (*Sambad Bhaskar*, 1856).

The per capita income of the Calcuttans was Rs. 20 per annum in 1868. But it became Rs. 30 in 1899. Digby, of course, held a different view—it was Rs. 18 according to him. The wage of a labourer in the town was Rs. 5, while that of an agricultural labourer was Rs. 3.

## CHAPTER XII

### FROM METROPOLIS TO MEGALOPOLIS

The city of our state should be a common centre, linked to the sea as well as the land, and equally linked to the territory. We ought to plan the ideal of our city with an eye to four considerations—health, defence, political activities and beauty of appearance.

—Aristotle : *The Politics* (ed. E. Barker), 306-7.

The evolution of Calcutta has been as follows. In the first stage it was "Dhee Collecotte" (Dihi Calcutta or Kalkatah), 'Dihi' means a small district consisting of a few villages or the chief seat of such a district. The second stage was reached when it became a town. That is to say, it became "a compactly settled area as distinguished from surrounding rural territory—(it was) usually larger than a village but smaller than a city." Thus Calcutta combined with Sutanuti and Govindpur became a town. In the third stage Calcutta became a city, that is, "an inhabited place of greater size, population or importance than a town or village".<sup>1</sup> Usually, it is "a borough on which the title of city has been conferred by the Crown; a town which has or has half a cathedral". The fourth stage came when Calcutta became the capital of the British Raj in 1772 and it remained so till 1912, i.e. for 140 years. Now 'capital' means "the city which is the official seat of government in a country, state". The fifth stage came with the city of Calcutta turning into a metropolis. The latter means "the chief city (not necessarily), the capital of a country, state or region: the mother or parent state of an ancient Greek or other colony". This stage stretched from 1912 to 1970 when the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority Act was passed and it gave a statutory recognition to the metropolis. From this also emerged the 6th or last stage megalopolis. It is "a large urban

1. *Websters' 7th New Collegiate Dictionary*, 152, 936.

region consisting of adjoining towns and suburbs which have merged".<sup>2</sup>

### I. *The area and population of the Metropolis*

The word 'metropolis' is derived from Greek 'metr', mother plus 'polis', city. It is the 'mother city'. The Greeks had a special word for the city as a place of residence, viz, 'asty'. The word 'polis' originally meant the citadel (or *acropolis* as it was called at Athens) at the foot of which lay the political community, including both the residents in the *asty* (with any magistrates or others resident in the citadel) and the country-dwellers round the *asty* who frequented it for business and politics. This transference and extension of the sense of the word *polis* is easy to understand. In the words of Barker : "The citadel, to which alone the appellation of *polis* was originally given, was the natural centre of gravity and the focus of authority ; and it was an easy matter to use the term which originally denoted the centre in order to denote the whole circle and its content".<sup>3</sup>

However, a legal definition of a metropolitan area has been given by sec. 8(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (Act II of 1974). Under it the State Government may, by notification, declare that "any area comprising a city or town whose population exceeds one million shall be a *metropolitan area*". Subsection (2) states that "each of the Presidency towns of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and the city of Ahmedabad shall be deemed to be declared under subsection (1) to be a metropolitan area". This means that Calcutta is a metropolis, having more than 10 lakhs population. Let us see how the population has increased. In 1850-51 Calcutta's population was 4,13,182. In the next 50 years this figure rose to 14,88,323. Calcutta was then the only city in India to attain the 'million' mark. In 1911 the census recorded the population figure of 17,18,426. The 1921 census recorded 18,50,650. In 1931 the figure became 21,05,708—it was the first city to surpass the 2 million mark. In 1941 the population for the Calcutta Metropolitan area was 35,77,789 while in 1951 it reached 45,88,910. In 1961 the population of the

2. Hamlyn's Encyclopedic World Dictionary, 256, 309, 985, 997.

3. Barker, E (ed.)—The politics of Aristotle (1962), Introduction LXV.

CMDA (Calcutta Metropolitan Development Area) became 57,36,697, which was 70,31,382 in 1971. The exodus explosion caused the population in the Calcutta Metropolitan District to shoot up to 91,65,650 in 1981 with a sex ratio of 783 per thousand males and an average literacy rate of 65.54%. The male literacy rate in Calcutta is 70.95% and the female rate is 58.62%. The population growth rate was 22.57% during 1961-71, but during 1971-81 the rate was 30.35%.

Calcutta is one of the 14 cities of the world and as an urban area world's largest agglomeration having 9.1 million population. The world's largest agglomeration is New Jersey having 20.4 million (N.Y.) ; the second is Yokahama (Tokyo) having 20 million) ; the 7th is Beijing with 10.7 million ; the 9th is London having 10.2 million ; and the 11th is Paris with 9.9 million. Calcutta first developed as a capital city and later as the industrial hub of the Port. It grew up lineally along the left bank of the Hooghly. In 1880 her population was 6,90,000. It mounted steadily to 11,60,000 in 1931. The next 20 years saw a steep rise to 26,90,000 (1951). The normal growth rate was accelerated by migrants flowing from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) because of the partition of Bengal on 15 August, 1947. As a result the population shot to 92,30,000 in 1961. It increased to 31,41,180 in 1971. Thereafter in 1981 Calcutta recorded 33,05,006 as population. The males and females were 19,30,370 and 13,74,686. The figures for three Municipalities included since January 4, 1984 were as follows : Garden Reach—area 12.95 sq. km, population 1,91,107 ; South Suburban—area 30.33 sq. km, pop.—3,94,916 ; Jadavpur—area 40 sq. km, pop.—2,51,968. Formerly Calcutta had an area of 104 sq. km and a population of 33,05,006. But the Calcutta Municipal Corporation has now an area of 187.33 sq. km and a population of 41,42,997. In the 1981 census the Scheduled Caste population was 1,49,903 with 91,749 males and 58,154 females. The Scheduled Tribes had a population of 4,420 with 2,981 males and 1,439 females. And the Calcutta urban agglomeration has an area of 852.23 sq. km. and a population of 9,19,4,018. The Municipal Calcutta does not include (1) Fort William, (2) part of Hastings Street north of the south edge of Clyde Row and Strand Road to the river bank, (3) the port area, and (4) the Canals. The areas of (1) and

(4) are respectively 551 acres and 278 acres. The density per sq. km is 21,933 persons.<sup>4</sup>

## II. *Calcutta as a metropolis*

### (a) *CMDA*

Calcutta showed symptoms of general functional failure—it is an example of urban decay because of the phenomenal growth of population and the near collapse of the city's facilities and functions. The World Bank noted the situation as a national economic problem, while the World Health Organisation considered it an international health hazard. Both were willing to render assistance. And the Ford Foundation came forward with a team of consultants to examine the city's problems and to plan for the future. The government of West Bengal led by the late Dr. B. C. Roy formed the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation in 1961. The Calcutta Metropolitan District (or Greater Calcutta) was planned with Calcutta as its core to cover an area of 450 square miles along the two banks of the Hooghly. It includes two corporations—Calcutta and Chandernagore—33 municipalities including Howrah ; and 37 non-municipal Urban Units with patches of rural tracts separating them. The CMPO in collaboration with the Ford Foundation formulated a detailed Basic Development Plan for the Calcutta Metropolitan District in 1966. This envisaged an investment of Rs. 107 crores during the first phase of 5 years. A legal shape was given to the administrative decision by way of an Act, called The Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority Act (President's Act, no. 17) of 1970. To secure the necessary finance, it was decided to levy Octroi duty in the Calcutta Metropolitan Area. To this end another Act, named the Taxes on Entry of Goods into Calcutta Metropolitan Area Act (President's Act no. 18) of 1970, was passed. Previously the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Area (Use and Development of Land) Control Act XIV of 1965 had been passed. It was subsequently amended by Act XXXVII of 1969. To look after the

water supply and sanitation, another Act (President's Act no. 6) was passed and it was named The Calcutta Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority Act XIII of 1966. The objectives of the CMDA after the 1977 amendment are laid down thus :

- (a) the formulation of development plans for the Calcutta Metropolitan area ;
- (b) the coordination and execution of the plans ;
- (c) the supervision and execution of the projects ; and
- (d) the financing and execution of the projects.

In 1974 by a further amendment of the Act the Howrah Improvement Trust and the Calcutta Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority (CMWSA) were brought under the CMDA. The Calcutta Metropolitan District now covers an area of 1,425 sq. km with a population of 10.3 million. It comprises 3 Municipal Corporations, 34 Municipalities ; 62 non-Municipal urban areas and 518 rural units. The density per sq. km is 7,228 persons.

Within the Metropolitan area there are 260 refugee colonies for 4 lakhs of refugees coming from Bangladesh (former East Pakistan). They are in 10 clusters of refugee colonies. To this number are added the migrants from other states such as Behar, UP and Orissa and also from the districts of 24-Parganas and Howrah adjoining Calcutta. The *Statesman* dated 23 August, 1989 as p. 9 records the slum population as ranging between 3.21 million to 3.67 million. It is next to Bombay having such population between 6.62 million to 7.7 million i.e. about 30 to 35 per cent of the State's urban population. The 1971 census estimated the number of pavement dwellers at 48,802. A C.M.D.A. survey reveals that 86.7% came for economic reasons. 55.8% are very poor with income from Rs. 0 to Rs. 80 ; the middle class is 32% with income ranging between Rs. 80 and Rs. 140; and the well-off is 12%, having income between Rs. 140 and 200 and above. But now the number of pavement-dwellers has risen to 2 lakhs—of this 28% are migrants from neighbouring states, 50% from the districts of the State and 2% from other places. The CMDA now operates in 4 sectors—water supply ; sewerage and drainage ; traffic and transportation ; Area Development and Bustee Improvement. The work done by the CMDA is no mean achievement. The water supply has risen from 80 to



140 million gallons per day. *Second*, one-half of the city now stands covered by sewerage in place of the former one-third. *Third*, the road traffic and transportation have improved with the widening of 20 major roads and construction of 4 bridges, 2 fly-overs and one pedestrian subway at the Howrah station area. *Fourth*, about 1.6 million slum population have been covered under the slum improvement scheme. The slums in these areas have got drinking water, paved roads, drains, sanitary latrines and electricity.<sup>5</sup> However, in a recent survey (*The Statesman* dated December 14, 1989 at p. 3) by the C.M.D.A. it is found that Calcutta has about 7,13,571 children of 1-14 age-group living in slums and on pavements. Of them 10 per cent may be called "street children" as defined by the UNICEF. They are categorised into three groups—(1) "children on the street", who have families to whom they return at the end of the day ; (2) "children of the street", who have run away from home and eke out a living on the streets ; and (3) "abandoned children", who have no one to return to. Life on the street is "savage, poor, nasty, brutish and short". Most of them take to anti-social activities like pocket—picking, stealing, smuggling, gambling, drug-peddling and prostitution.

(b) *The metropolis turns a megalopolis*

The Calcutta Metropolitan District is patterned after the New York metropolitan district<sup>6</sup> as defined by the US Census bureau. It has a land area of 2,514.11 sq. miles lying in the States of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut and had a population of 12,831,914 according to the 1952 census. In addition to New York city, it includes such important centres of industry and population as Newark, Paterson, Elizabeth, Bayonne, Hoboken, Passaic, Union city, East Orange, Perth Amboy, Orange and New Brunswick in New Jersey ; Yorkers, Mount Vernon, New Rochelle and White Plains in New York ; and Stamford and Norwalk in Connecticut. Altogether the district contains 373 independent, self-governing municipalities lying within a radius of about 40 miles from New York city hall.

5. Ray, N. R.—Calcutta, 102-3, 106-7.

6. Encyclopaedic Britannica, vol. 15 at 376-7.

New York city is the largest in the USA and situated at the mouth of the Hudson river just as Calcutta city lies on the Hooghly. The former consists of five boroughs : (1) the Bronx—41 sq. miles ; (2) Manhattan—22 sq. miles ; (3) Queens—108 sq. miles ; (4) Brooklyn—71 sq. miles ; and (5) Richmond—57 sq. miles. The land area measures 299 sq. miles with a population of 7,89,957 (1952). With water surface it measures about 365 sq. miles. The greatest length from north-east to south-west is 35 miles, while the greatest width, east and west is 24 miles. It was the first US capital under the Constitution (1789-90) and President Washington was inaugurated here. Thereafter Washington became the capital. It has been co-extensive (since 1895 when Georgetown became part of Washington) with the District of Columbia—it stands on Potomac river to the south-west of Baltimore. The building of White House began in 1792 and of Capital in 1793. The Congress and here on 1800 and Jefferson was the first President inaugurated here.

One word about the terminology. There is a difference between a metropolis and a megalopolis. A metropolis means literally a mother city on the Greek analogy as already explained. But a 'megalopolis' has been pinned down by Webster's Third New International Dictionary, vol. II (1981) at page 1404 to "a thickly populated region centred around a metropolis (the megalopolis including New York city and adjacent sections of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut)". This is the proper terminology to be followed. Hence, the nomenclature given by the US census bureau and used in the Calcutta Acts need revision. In other words, the word 'metropolis' should be replaced by 'megalopolis'. It should be remembered that the latter is "centred around a metropolis". Calcutta is a metropolis, while the megalopolitan district comes under a megalopolis.

### III. *The social complex*

Calcutta is one of the world's most over-crowded cities. The city proper—not the Calcutta Metropolitan District—contains 1,02,010 people per square mile, while the next rival Ahmedabad has 56,540 people per square mile. About two-thirds of the people live in *Kutcha* (non-permanent) buildings and more than 57% of multi-member families have only one living room. Nearly half of the families is cramped into one room and a member has

only 30 square feet. And one-third of the people in the city—that is, one million out of 3.3 million—live in bustees or slums. Baron Dowleams has given a definition of a bustee thus : "Bustees are large spots of grounds, belonging to a particular individual and let out in small portions to the poorest class of the native community. The tenants build their own huts and pay only ground rent to the owner of the locality. The particular spot on which the hut is erected, is generally taken on a lease of 12 months, at the expiration of which the lease may be renewed, or the tenant is at liberty to remove his hut, provided he has paid the ground rent due by him".<sup>7</sup> If these slum-dwellers are to be housed, some 12,000 dwellings are to be constructed per year over a period of 30 years. This is a Herculean task indeed. Then there remains the problem of lack of space for parks and playgrounds. The existing space is about 1200 acres, which is far below the international standard of 13,500 acres.

Moreover, traffic and transport are a daily ordeal. An overcrowded bus or a tram moves at a snail's pace. This gives the impression that the place lacks both time and space. The Calcuttans have mastered the art of living dangerously, as it is said. While land space for roads in cities of developing countries is about 25-30%, Calcutta provides only 6.5% of the total land area. This is the result of an unplanned city. Besides, there is the free movement of all sorts of vehicles—hand carts, rickshaws, trucks, bullock or buffalo carts. The surface traffic has the carrying capacity of 2.8 million passengers every day against the demand of over 6.8 million. This is a dismal picture. It is seen that the Calcutta Metropolitan District has a population of 9.5 million, of which 4 million live below the poverty line with mostly household income of less than Rs. 300.<sup>8</sup>

Calcutta retains its old cosmopolitan complex. The Bengalis were the original settlers. Thereafter came the migrants from different parts of India and even from countries beyond. There had been a sparkling of Europeans, viz, the British, Portuguese, Dutch, Danes, French, Greek in addition to Armenians, Abyssinians, Persians, Jews and the Chinese. In the social complex, the Bengali Hindus occupy a prominent place. They are divided

7. Dowleams, B.—"Calcutta in 1860" in Chaudhury, P/Mukhopadhyaya (ed), *Calcutta : people and empire*, 15.

8. Ray, *op. cit.*, 103, 105.

into the main caste-groups, that is, the Brahmans, Vaidyas and Kayasthas, the Subarnabaniks, and the Gandhabaniks. The upper castes have changed their traditional calling and taken to that of Medicine, Law, Engineering, Science and Service. The latter have stuck to their traditional occupations through minimum change and adjustment. The Calcutta Muslims have both Bengali and non-Bengali elements and form a composite body. There are the aristocrats who claim connection with the imperial house of Delhi and the royal house of Oudh and Mysore. There are the commercial classes from Delhi, UP and Punjab. Next are the Hindustani and Urdu-speaking businessmen, labourers and artisans. And lastly the Bengali-speaking Mahomedans consist of tailors, shop-keepers and pedlars.

The Indian communities are the Rajasthanis, Gujaratis, Punjabis, Sindhis and South Indians. The Rajasthanis usually called the Marwaris came in large numbers after the First World War (1914-18). They started as tradesmen and investors in land. At present they have stepped into the shoes of the old European firms. The Gujaratis began as traders in textiles, timber and tobacco and then added coal and shipping. Now they manufacture chemical and pharmaceutical products. The Punjabis residing in South Calcutta excel in the supplies of labour, machineries, tools, and transport as well as in organisational skill. The Sindhis have business in jewellery and textiles. The South Indians from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are now permanent residents like the above communities. Except Bhowanipur almost every third house in South Calcutta is tenanted by them in a professional capacity. All these communities have created what is called "Cultural pluralism". They have maintained their linguistic identities and set up distinctive residential concentrations of their own in selected areas of the city. In the words of N. K. Bose : "A caste-like segregation in residences as well as preferences for occupations persists in Calcutta even when the city has thrown up many new occupations of various kinds. This separateness of communities is further augmented by the ways of living, dress, religion. This superstructure of *cultural pluralism* has persisted in the civic community of Calcutta and has helped indirectly in maintaining commercial differences".<sup>9</sup>

The non-Bengali businessmen follow, in a modified form, what the former East India Company did in regard to their trades. In their case the word Banian was important. The word is a corruption of 'Bania', derived from 'Banik', a merchant. The Sheristadar of the Judges' and Collectors' courts and of the Salt and commercial agencies was called Dewan. And the native manager of an English Agency House and of a ship-captain was called by the Natives *Mutsuddi* and by the Europeans *Banian*. In fact the Banian in old times was the factotum of houses and captains, and from the absence of any European banking establishment had the sole charge of all their monetary transactions. The Dewan has now become the Superintendent or Head Clerk of a firm, while the Banian, the Manager or Managing Director. There was a third word. In those days the captain, officer, doctor and the carpenter and gunner of the company's vessels, commonly called *Indiamen*, used to bring out from England investments of their own for sale at the several Presidency towns in India.<sup>10</sup> Now-a-days non-Bengalis bring their goods to Calcutta by the Railways, ships and other public transports. Sometimes they have their own transports, replacing the old *Indiamen*. Since motels are in use—they are motor + hotel; so the Calcutta—bound transports may be designated 'Calmo', i.e., Calcutta—bound motors.

#### IV. *The Calcuttans in their activities*

##### (a) *Wealthy people*

The most prominent Bengalis of the 18th century in respect of wealth were—(1) Motilal Sil (Shipowner) of 15 million and above; (2) Ramdulal De (Sarkar) of Rs. 12.5 million; (3) Maharaja Nabakissen of more than Rs. 10 million; (4) Debi Sinha of over Rs. 10 million; (5) N. C. Mullick of over Rs. 8 million; (6) Nilambar Sil of over Rs. 7.5 million; (7) Gopimohan Tagore of Rs. 6.5 million and above; (8) and Priti Ram Marh and Marh family of over Rs. 5 million.

The last deserves mention since the family was instrumental in developing Ramkrishna Paramahansa's *sadhana*. Pritiram Dās (b. 1753) in 767 took shelter as an orphan in the zamindar Jugal Manna's house in Jaan Bazar (S. N. Banerjee Road). He

10. Dowleas, *op. cit.* 65.

had a smattering of English and with Manna Babu's help started supplying rations to the English soldiers. Meanwhile he took to many other trades, for example, the supply of bamboos in lots, called 'marh' and the family came to be known as the 'Marh' family of Jaan Bazar. Pritiram married his patron's daughter in 1777 and got as dowry a few houses and 16 bighas of land. He had two sons—the second Rajchandra married twice but both the wives died. In 1803 Rajchandra married for the third time, a young lady, Rasmoni (1790-1861) near Hali-shahar, 25 miles from Calcutta. In 1838 Rajchandra died and Rashmoni became the administrator of all the properities. She built a silver chariot (Rath)—she was generous and carried on religious functions. For this she was called 'Rani Rashmoni' by people. Her son-in-law, Mathura Mohan purchased 16 bighas of land in Dakshin-cswara and there Rani Rashmoni built the Kalibari in 1855 at a cost of Rs. 9 lakhs, and on 31 May, 1855 inaugurated it. Ramkrishna came there at 18 from a Chatuspathi in Calcutta and worked as a helper to the priest. There is a now a row of 12 Shiva temples that form a picturesque setting with the Ganga frontage. People from all over the world come here. Swami Vivekananda, Ramkrishna's disciple came to this place in 1881-2. Rani Rashmoni died on 19 February, 1861. Her daughter Jagadamba built the Annapurna Temple at Barrackpore in 1874.

(b) *Men of education and ideas*

1. *Educational institutions*

(i) *General*

Before the advent of the foreigners there were 'Pathshalas' to give people the elementary education. Besides, the Brahmin Pundits ran 'Tols' and 'Chatuspathis' for teaching in Sanskrit Scriptures, while the Mahomedans had their 'maktabas' and 'mad-rashas' run by Maulabis. Most of these centres were financed by grants from rich donors as well as by contributions from churches and charity trusts. During the time of Warren Hastings (1772-84) grant was given to Charles Wilkins for making 'Bengali' types from moulds and 'A Grammar of the Bengali Language' by N. B. Halhed (1751-1830) was printed in 1778 with these types.

In 1800 a college for the Civilian Clerks' education was star-

ted in Fort William where Sanskrit, Bengali, Persian and Arabic were taught. Maharaja Joynarayan Ghosal of Bhukailash Raj of Kidderpore opened an English School in his residential area in 1814. English learning by Bengalis started in right earnest with the establishment of the Supreme Court in 1774. Three vocabularies were published for this—the first in 1793 by Aaron Upjohn, the second in 1797 by John Miller and the third in 1799 by Henry Forster.

In 1818 David Hare (1775-1842) and Radhakanta Deb founded the Calcutta School society with the patronage of Marquis of Hastings. Earlier on January 20, 1817 David Hare got the Hindu College established. He was a watch-dealer by profession, who came to Calcutta in 1800. He devoted his entire fortune, time and energy to educate the Bengalis since 1811. He chose this country as his own.

John Drinkwater Bethune was another philanthropic worker for the spread of education among Bengali ladies. Bethune worked with Hare and gave a blue signal for female education in 1850 and the Bethune Society was born in 1851. The Bethune school for women was founded in 1849 and the college attached to it came into being in 1879.

In August 1821 it was decided to set up an educational institution for the children of the soil and the name chosen was "Sanskrit College". On the north of Goldighi (College Square) 5 bighas and 7 cottahs of land belonging to David Hare were secured and the foundation stone of the college laid on 25 February, 1824. The Hindu College functioning in Chitpore was taken over as a Government College. And the Sanskrit College was also to be run by Government. It was decided to run both the Colleges in a building to be constructed. To this end Government sanctioned Rs. 1,20,000. On the completion of the new building on May 1, 1826 the Sanskrit College along with the Hindu College and school started functioning in this. Initially the Sanskrit College was open only to the upper classes; but subsequently it was thrown open to all. The Hindu College became transformed into Presidency College in June, 1854. In July, 1830 Alexander Duff of Scottish Churches with the help of Raja Ram Mohan Roy founded the General Assembly's Institution—first a school, then a college and finally the Scottish Churches College in a new building. This was the first college to start co-

educational classes in Calcutta. Its new building opposite to Hedua Park (Cornwallis Square) was completed in 1838.

In 1857 the Calcutta University was founded after the pattern of the London University. It was an examining body with the privilege of conferring degrees in Arts, Science, Engineering and Medicine. Later it started Post-graduate classes. There were the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and the Senate. The Syndicate was composed of the Vice-Chancellor and a few members elected by different faculties and this was the Governing Body. The Senate Hall presented a grand spectacle of 6 lofty Ionic columns but it was replaced in the 1960 by a multi-storied building. At present there are two Pro-Vice-Chancellors—one in charge of Academic affairs, the other in charge of Finance. In the earlier years it was accommodated in rented premises until a site was acquired in College Street in 1864. The Senate Hall was started two years after. The building was erected by the Public Works Department at a cost of Rs. 4,40,000 and completed in 1872 and occupied by the University in 1873. The Asutosh Building was constructed at a cost of Rs. 8 lakhs to the south of the Senate Hall and opened by the Governor in 1926. Originally it was a two-storied structure—a third storey was added in 1927. There is the Asutosh Museum housed in the multi-storied building over the old Senate site. It was the first Museum in India. More than 10,000 exhibits relating to Eastern India are housed in it. To the West stands the Darbhanga Building erected at a cost of Rs. 2 lakhs of which the Maharaja of Darbhanga contributed Rs. 24 lakhs. The University is a teaching and affiliating university. In 1980-81 it had 224 colleges with 10,212 students in its own college and 1,20,867 students in its affiliated colleges.

## (ii) *Missionary*

A number of missionary educational institutions were also started. The St. Xavier's College was established in 1834. The present building meant for Sans Souci Theatre was purchased by Rev. Dr. Carew in 1844 and the college named St. John College. Later the Belgian Jesuits came and took it over and ran it as St. Xavier's College from 1846. In 1862 the college became affiliated to the Calcutta University. On March 1, 1836, General Claude Martin, a French man opened a second institution called La Martiniere school. He himself gave Rs. 2 lakhs and another



Rs. 1½ lakhs was secured. It has a girls' section in addition to the boys' section. It was the most wealthy school, later transformed into a college. The third institution—Loretto House—was founded by the Loretto sisters in 1842 in a three-storied building. It was formerly the site of the garden house of H. Vansittart, Governor of Bengal (1760-64) in the Middleton Row area. It was sometime occupied by Sir Elijah Impey, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court at Calcutta. Since 1889 it has been affiliated to the Calcutta University.

(iii) *Special*

A school of Arts was set up in 1854 by a group of men with the name "The Society for the promotion of Industrial Arts". Government took it over in 1864 and placed it under the charge of a European Principal. A picture gallery was added. Formerly it was located in Bombazar Street and now in the Indian Museum Building. Besides industrial arts, sculpture, portrait-painting, landscapes, the Tagore school and Lucknow School of painting and western arts it has in its curriculum oriental school of art. Long ago it attained the status of a college.

In 1876 Dr. Mahendralal Sircar set up the Indian Association for the cultivation of science in a building in the Bowbazar area. It has since been transferred to Jadavpur, where it is now equipped with a big modern science library, a workshop and laboratories. In 1907 C. V. Raman (1888-1970) came to Calcutta as an officer in the Finance Department of the Government of India. He joined the Indian Association at Bowbazar as a member after obtaining permission to carry on researches at the Association Laboratory in his spare time. Here he discovered the "Raman effect" for which he was elected in 1925 a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was knighted in 1929 and in 1930 he got a Nobel Prize in Physics.

The Calcutta Blind School was established in 1897 by Rev. Lalbehary Shah to teach the blind how to read and write so as to make them useful members of the society. Pupils used to receive here literary education first up to the primary, then gradually to the High School standard and later to graduate level. Vocational training forms part of this institution. The teaching is by the "Braille System". The School had Braille Code in English, Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit. Students passing out from this insti-

tution took degrees from the Calcutta University. In 1925 the school shifted to its present buildings on the Diamond Harbour Road in Behala and has expanded a lot. After the death of Rev. Shah his son, A. K. Shah became the Principal of the school. Some years ago he died.

Srinath Sinha founded in 1893 the Calcutta Deaf and Dumb School at 13, Mirzapore Street. At first it started its classes in a part of the City College. In 1903 it was shifted to its present site at 293 Upper Circular Road. The oral method of teaching is employed, by which the students are made to understand each other's speech by means of lip movements. The signs and finger-spellings are not used. The school has an industrial department in which students are trained in different arts and crafts such as drawing, printing, modelling, tailoring, carpentry etc. The Executive Committee runs the institute, that is fully maintained by the Government.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. *The printing press and publications*

Portuguese was the language for servants and a kind of *lingua franca* in Calcutta—religious services were held in it. Persian was the language of diplomacy and courts. In it the English transacted business both with the Natives and Armenians. Through his skill in it Nabakissen rose from being Clive's Munshi in 1760 to great influence and wealth. Bengali was little known—it was considered the language of fishermen, a poor mongrel dialect unworthy of study.<sup>12</sup> In 1765 the natives presented a petition to the Government to have the English laws translated in Bengali. At the time there were not a dozen natives in Calcutta who could understand English. It is found from *consultations* dated July 3, no. 335 that the then President of Cuttack, Bristow had been dismissed in 1758 for his ignorance of the native language.<sup>13</sup> In 1776 N. B. Halhed published '*A code of Gentoo Laws*' from London and in 1778 *A grammar of the Bengali Language* from Hooghly. Halhed requested the Governor-General, Warren Has-

tings to publish the latter. At this Hastings called in Charles Wilkins, who was the first man to prepare the Bengali types. He taught Panchanan Karmakar this method. Later Panchanan and his son-in-law Monohar prepared the Bengali types. It was a difficult task indeed as observed by Halhed in the Preface to his *Grammar* : "That the Bengali letter is very difficult to be imitated in steel will be readily allowed by any person who shall examine the intricacies of strokes, the useful length and size of the characters, and the variety of their positions and combinations".<sup>14</sup> During the 21-year period (1778-99) six persons deserve mention, viz, N. B. Halhed, Jonathan Duncan, N. B. Edmonstone, Henry Pitts Forster, A. Upjohn, and John Miller. They published grammar, vocabulary and Tutor as well as translations of law.

The Fort William College was founded on May 4, 1800. William Carey joined the college on May 4, 1801 as Professor of Bengali with Mrityunjaya Vidyalkar as Chief Pandit and Ramnath Bachaspati as his assistant. Another assistant was Ramram Basu. Carey's *Kathopkathan* and *Bengali grammar* came out in 1802. Mrityunjay's *Batrish Sinhasan* in 1802 and Ramram Basu's *Raja Pratapaditya Charit* in 1801. In the early 19th century (1810-20) North Calcutta published *Bat-tula* series at cheaper prices. Thus the *Ramayan*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas*, *Vidyasundar* etc. were published. And this continued till 1876 when a movement to bring out scientific books began.

Earlier English transactions of Sanskrit books were printed. Thus Charles was the first to translate 'Bhagavat Gita' into English in 1785. Then came *Shakuntala* in English translation by Sir William Jones in 1791, which was rendered into German later on. This roused the interest of the German Scholar, Max Muller residing in England. He devoted his life to study and publish books on Hindu philosophy and religion. And in 1882 he started his first lecture in Cambridge under the caption "India, what can it teach us?".

### 3. Prominent educationists

Isvarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-91) was a pundit among pundits. This rests on his career as a student of the Sanskrit College.

14. Halhed, N. B.—A grammar of the Bengali language (1778), Preface xiii.

1824 and his success as the Principal of the College (1852-58). Vidyasagar wrote 2 or 3 text books for the college of Fort William, e.g., *Vetalpanchavinsati* (25 tales of the Vetal), 1847. He also adapted *Sakuntala* (1854) and *Sitar Vanavas* (1860) from Sanskrit as well as *Bhrantivilas* (1369) from Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. But the monumental work was his *varnapari-cay*, which illustrates how infants can learn the Bengali alphabet and their combinations. To this teaching method were added two others, namely, *upakramanika* and *Vyakarankaumudi*. The latter two teach the elementary and advanced grammars of classical Sanskrit. But for these works, it would have been difficult for the learners to comprehend Bengali and Sanskrit languages.

Tagore also experimented with education in Santiniketan, "A poet's school" was his ideal. He wanted to revive the old *tapo-vana*, the forest dwelling of the patriarchal community of ancient India. The people there were seekers of truth and to this end they lived in an atmosphere of purity, but not of Puritanism. Their aim and endeavour had been suggested by the *Upanishad* thus : 'Those men of serene mind enter into the All, having realised and being everywhere in union with the omnipresent spirit'. To realise this spirit of the *tapavana* in the modern conditions of life, Tagore established his school in Santiniketan that grew into *Vishvabharati*. And the most important item in his educational endeavour may be described in his own words. 'I tried to create an atmosphere in my institution, giving it the principal place in our programme of teaching. In educational organisations our reasoning faculties have to be nourished to allow our mind its freedom in the world of truth, our *imagination* for the world which belongs to art, and our *sympathy* for the world of human relationship".<sup>15</sup>

Sir Asutosh Mookerjee (1864-1924) was a towering personality in the realm of education. The Calcutta University is deeply indebted to him. He was first called upon in 1906 to be the Vice-Chancellor of this University. He continued to hold this post till 1914 and as an astute strategist and wise educationist he transformed the university from an examining body to a teaching institution. He found an honoured place for the mother tongues

in "that step-mother's hall". Post-Graduate Faculties in Arts and Sciences were created for study and research. In 1921 he was again appointed Vice-Chancellor. His term was cut short when the Government of the day wanted to impose conditions (1922) for financial assistance sought by the University. Asutosh resigned as a protest with his famous speech: "Freedom first, freedom second, freedom always—nothing less would satisfy me".<sup>16</sup> Asutosh laid down three stages in the educational system—school; college; university. The law of adjustment and development has been one of reform, re-organisation and revolution. Ultimately they are incorporated in thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. And this has become the ideal of the Indian Universities since then.

It may be noted in this connection that the first two graduates of the Calcutta University in 1858 were Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94), the famous Bengali novelist and Jadunath Basu. In 1882 two ladies became the first graduates—Kadambini Ganguly (1861-1923) and Chandra Mukhi Basu (1860-1944).

#### 4. *Men of ideas*

It has been said of Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) that he was "the precursor and in a real sense the father of modern India". Dr. Brojendranath Seal further added in his inaugural address at Sri Ramkrishna centenary Parliament of Religion in 1937 that he "sought the universal religion, the common basis of the Hindu, Muslim, Christian and other faiths". Rammohan played two roles in his own person. As a universalist he formulated the creed of Neo-theophilanthropy—a new love of God and Man—and became one of the forefathers of the unitarian creed in the west, the other three being Prince, Priestly and Canning. And as a nationalist Reformer he had a three-fold mission. *First*, as a Hindu Reformer he gave a unitarian redaction of the Hindu shastras from the Vedanta and the Mahanirvana Tantra. *Second*, as a Moslem defender of the faith, he wrote the Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhiddin and Monozeatul Adiyen. *Third*, as a Christian he gave a unitarian version of the scriptures, old and new.<sup>17</sup> On 20 August 1828 he founded the "*Brahma Samaj*". And in December 1823

he had sent a letter to the Governor-General, Lord Amherst, requesting him to "promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and Anatomy with other useful sciences".

Henry Derozio (1809-31) was another. His mode of teaching in the Hindu College was wonderful : he taught history as one of philosophic mind would teach it. He had the rare power of weaving interest around any subject he taught. He founded a Debating Society and became the oracle of Young Bengal. His pupils became subsequently famous : Krishna Mohan Banerjee (1813-85), Ramgopal Ghosh (1815-68), Rai Hara Chunder Ghosh Bahadur (1808-68), Dukhinarayan Mukherji (1810-78), Degumber Mitter (1817-79), Piary Chand Mitra (1814-33) and Ramkanto Lahiri (1813-98). He was dismissed from service as he had been corrupting the youths of Bengal like Socrates. The corruption in the former's case, as thought by the native managers of the college, was that "some of the pupils were making progress by actually cutting their way through ham and beef and wading to liberalise though tumblers of beer". Derozio was a revolutionary in ideas.<sup>18</sup> James Prinsep was the first to decipher Asoka's Rock edict at Girnar in Gujarat dated 250 B.C.

Brojendranath Seal (1864-1938) graduated in 1881 from the General Assemblies Institution and stood first in first class in philosophy in 1883. He was a classmate of Sri Vivekananda. He was proficient in 10 Indian and European languages. He got Ph.D, D.Sc. and Knighthood. From 1921 to 1930 he was Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University and the Maharaja of Mysore conferred on him the title '*Rajaratna-pradipa*'. In 1921 at the invitation of Rabindranath Dr. Seal presided over the inaugural function of the foundation of the Visvabharati at Santiniketan. He was a pioneer in introducing Mathematics in the study of comparative literature and philosophy. In recent years Dr. A. B. Biswas has made an extensive use of Mathematics in different disciplines. Thus he has applied Mathematics in literature as in his *Calculus of Poetics* (1976), in law as in *The Metrics of Legal Philosophy* (1971) and in Religion as in '*A spiritual Calculus* (1977). The more important books of Dr. Seal are :

(1) A memoir of the co-efficient of Numbers—a chapter on the Theory of Numbers ; (2) Neo-Romantic Movement in literature 1890-91 ; (3) New essays in Criticism (1903) ; (4) Positive sciences of ancient Hindus (1915) ; (5) Syllabus of Indian Philosophy (1924) ; (6) Rammohan the Universal Man (1933) ; (7) The Quest Eternal (1936) and others.

(c) *Religious leaders*

Ramkrishna Paramhansa (1836-86) was "the man whose image" as pointed out by Romain Rolland to his western readers in 1928, "was the consummation of 2000 years of the spiritual life of 300 million people". In the words of Sir Aurobindo : "The world could not bear a second birth like that of Ramkrishna Paramhansa in 500 years". The uniqueness of his yogic exercise was that he had the "colossal spiritual capacity to (take) the Kingdom of Heaven by violence and (seize) upon one yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it always (returned) to the realisation and possession of God by the extension of inborn spirituality". He preached "Yata mat, tata path" (as many faiths, so many paths, every faith has a path of God). This is the only pragmatic basis of inter-human relationships. In this declaration of the equality of paths and the equality of faiths, Ramkrishna voices the same sentiments of democracy and republicanism as are used in the problems of civic welfare and political life. Such a republic of religions had never been propounded before Ramakrishna. So this dictum is one of the most profoundest contributions to world peace.<sup>19</sup> And this is termed 'secularism' in the Preamble to the Indian Constitution (1950). Clause 44 of the Constitution (45th Amendment) Bill 1978 proposing to insert in Art. 366 a definition of the term 'secular' stated : "the expression 'Republic', as qualified by the expression 'secular', means a republic in which there is equal respect for all religions". And Ramakrishna anticipated this by more than half a century ago.

His disciple was Narendranath Dutt (Swami Vivekananda) (1863-1902). He graduated from the General Assemblies Institution (Scottish Church College) in 1884. He completed his

19. Sarkar, B. K.—'Religious Unity is a Contradiction in terms' in *The Religions of the world* (ed), R.K.M.I.C. (1987), vol. II, 101.

course in Law in the Metropolitan Institution (Vidyasagar College) in 1886, but did not appear in the final examination. Since his student life he had been searching for God, the Absolute Truth. At least on a hint from his teacher Hastie he in 1882 found Ramakrishna to be the man. Under his guidance all his doubts were dispelled and he realised the Absolute Truth in 1886. Before his demise Ramakrishna entrusted Narendra with the responsibility of carrying on his work. Thereafter he organised his brother-disciples at Baranagore Math, wherein they took formal *Sannyasa* and new names. He toured in India. He joined the Parliament of Religious held at Chicago on 11 September, 1893. He spoke on the Universality of Vedantism on September 19 and on the essence of all religions on September 27. His works are collected in 8 volumes. His idea of religion is universal: "Each man is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling nature, external and internal. That is the whole of religion". With Rs. 39,000 donated by Miss Henrieta Muller and Mrs. Oli Bull Vivekananda purchased the site of the *Belur Math* and built a small Muth on 9 December, 1898. And the Ramakrishna Mission started functioning from January 2, 1899.

Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) graduated from the Hindu College in 1856. He became well grounded in the Vedas, the *Srimad Bhagabad Gita*, Bengali and Sanskrit literature. He started the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in 1859. He broke away from the old Samaj and founded a new one on November 11, 1860. The final split came in 1866 when Keshab established the Brahmo Samaj of India on November 11, of the year. In 1881 he preached the new Dispensation with the vows and ceremonies introduced by him. The new church had a direct appeal to the heart of the people.

Sri Aurobindo (1870-1950) was Aurobindo Ghose, son of Krishnadhona Ghosh, M.D. of Aberdeen, Scotland. He was educated in England and proficient in Greek, Latin and French. He returned to India in 1892 and accepted an employment in Baroda. He studied Sanskrit and other Indian languages. During 1902-10 he got himself involved in India's freedom movement. From August 1906 to August 1907 he was Principal of the Bengal National College. Arrested with 30 other revolutionaries in May 1908, Aurobindo spent a year in jail as an undertrial prisoner. He was defended by Chittaranjan Das and acquitted. A



spiritual turn came over to Aurobindo and he escaped to French Pondicherry through Chandernagore and reached there on 4 April, 1910. He withdrew himself from political activities and took to meditation and literature. In this he got help from Paul Richard and his wife (later Mother) who came to Pondicherry on the eve of the First World War. All three started the *Arya*, or monthly philosophical review, in August 1914. In it were published *The Life Divine*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The foundation of Indian Culture etc.* The *Arya* ceased publication in 1921. Sri Aurobindo wrote his epic *Savitri* in 23,813 lines of blank verse—it is the counterpart or the *Life Divine in verse*. It is the integral transformation that he aims at. And the matrix of transformation is the Super-mind that would bring about a new race of Super-men, of Truth-Conscious beings. His works have been collected in 30 volumes. Rabin-dranath said of him: "Accept Rabindranath's salutations. O Aurobindo. Thou art the wordy image of the soul of India".

#### (d) *Men of Science*

Some of the contributions made by the Calcuttans are outlined below :

*Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1938)*—was a pioneer in the field of physico-electro-physiological and plant-physiological researches in India and a doyen of Indian science. He graduated from the St. Xavier's College in 1879 in Science, (B) group. Under the influence of Rev. Father Lagont he developed his interest in the physical science. He joined the Christ College, Cambridge to prepare himself for the National Science Tripos examination and obtained the B.A. Degree of the Cambridge University and the B.Sc. degree of the London University in 1884. His research career started in 1894 when his interest in electric waves was roused by the work of Hertz through an account of Oliver Lodge. He worked in the wave-length range from 25 mm to 5 mm and developed suitable emitters and detectors for such waves. On the basis of these investigations published in the *Electrician*, the *Philosophical Magazine* and other journals he was awarded the D.Sc. degree of the London University. Thereafter during 1899-1907, Bose was involved in the study of responses in the living and the non-living. These investigations were published in several journals including *Proceedings of the Royal So-*

ciety and also in the form of a monograph, "Response in the living and non-living". From the response studies he switched over to biophysical and plant-physical and plant-physiological investigations on which he brought to bear the physicist's insight, and experimental skill. He founded the Bose Research Institute and opened it on 30 November, 1947. He had a taste for literature as well. His *Avyakta* in Bengali is a landmark in prose.

• *Prafulla Chandra Roy (1861-1944)*—passed the Entrance Examination in 1879 and joined the Metropolitan Institution and attended classes in Chemistry at the Presidency College. In 1882 he left for England as a Gilchrist Scholar and took the B.Sc. degree from the Edinburgh University in 1885 and D.Sc. in 1887. He held the Hope Prize Scholarship in 1887-88. He carried out researches in *Ayurveda*. He contacted the French Chemist Berthelet and with further researches published *The History of Hindu Chemistry* vol. I in 1902 and vol. II in 1909. In 1892 he founded the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical works and thereby laid the foundation of Indian Chemical industry. In 1902 the Bengal Chemical was made a limited liability company with a capital of Rs. 2 lakhs. In 1944 it had a capital of Rs. 20 lakhs and employed 5,000 workers. He had foreign tours in 1902 and 1912. In 1916 he joined the newly established college of science of the Calcutta University of the first Paik Professor of Chemistry. He inspired a generation of scientists such as Jnan Ghose and Meghnad Saha. He donated Rs. 2 lakhs to the Calcutta University for improvement of teaching in Chemistry.

*Satyendranath Bose (1894-1974)* was educated at the Presidency College and in 1915 he got his M.Sc. degree. He was a mathematician and physicist. He made significant contribution to Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Bose succeeded in deducing Planck's Law of Black Body radiation from the statistics of an assembly of photons in a 6-dimensional phase space. This method was later extended by Einstein to an assembly of material particles. And Bose's new method received the name of Bose-Einstein Statistics. Certain particles quantized have been named after Bose as *Bosons*. His work stimulated the research of Fermi and Dirac on the alternative statistics applied to most elementary particles and this is known as the Fermi-Dirac Statistics. His famous "Planck's Law and light quantum hypothesis" was published

in German translation in 1924 by Einstein in his journal and this made Bose famous throughout the world. This essay has been translated into Bengali by Dr. A. R. Biswas.

*Dr. Meghnad Saha (1893-1956)* stood first amongst East Bengal students in 1909 in the Entrance Examination and also first in four subjects including Mathematics amongst all candidates. In 1913 he graduated in Mathematics Hons, standing second and in 1915 stood first class second in Applied Mathematics. In 1918 he got an appointment in the newly started Science College. After two years' researches he got DSc. and P.R.S. His subject of research was Relativity, Pressure of light and astrophysics. In 1919 he acquired world-wide popularity for his "Theory of Thermal ionisation". He became Khaira Professor of Calcutta University. In 1923 he founded in Allahabad University a "School of Physics". In 1938 he became Palit Professor and built up the Institute of Nuclear Physics now called Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics. Earlier he founded the journal "Science and Culture" in 1935. The influence of Saha's work on the subsequent progress of Astrophysics has been internationally recognised. In the *Encyclopaedic Britannica* (14th edn.) Sir Arthur Eddington designates Saha's Theory as one of the 10 outstanding discoveries in Astronomy and Astrophysics since the discovery of the telescope in 1608 by Galileo.

*Prasanta Mahalanobis (1893-1972)* was a tripos of the Cambridge University in Mathematics and Physics. He joined the Indian Educational Service in 1922 and became Professor of Physics at the Presidency College and its Principal from 1945 to 1958. Since 1931 he was the Secretary and Director of the Indian Statistical Institute till the end of his life. In Anthropology his important contribution has been "Analysis of Race Mixture in Bengal". In this he discovered a new formula known after his name as the "Mahalanobis distance". His achievement was the establishment of the "Indian Statistical Institute."

#### (e) *Painters*

*Johann Zoffany (1733-1810)* was a founder-member of the Royal Academy of England (1768). He painted Queen Charlotte with her sons, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York. In 1780 he came to Calcutta. His paintings of Indian scenes and portraits

of some Indian Rulers are outstanding works of art. His most famous painting—"The Last Supper"—hangs in the St. John's Church at Calcutta. He presented it to the Church and all the Apostles were taken from the life of the then contemporary Calcuttans. The famous auctioneer, Old Tulloh sat for Judas without knowing it.

*Abanindranath Tagore* (1871-1951) was attracted to painting. He was proficient in English, French, Sanskrit and Bengali. He learnt from the Italian O. Ghilardie and the Englishman Palmer the art of painting in pastel, water colour, oil colour and portrait. At the request of E. V. Havell the Principal of the Government School of Art he became its Vice-Principal in 1898 and thereafter its Principal from 1905 to 1916. His first paintings appeared in the Indian style as illustrated in Krishna-lilas. Then Orissa Khyam paintings were done in the Japanese Style as learnt from Tykan. In his last days he developed what is called "*Katum Kutum*", a kind of abstract art-form. His book on the technique of art is "*Bharat Shilper Sadaanga*" (six limbs of Indian Art). From 1922 to 1927 he was Bage warri Professor of Indian Fine Art in the Calcutta University. His picture entitled 'The last hours of Shah Jahan' won high praise and Abanindra was awarded a gold medal for it.

*Nandalal Bose* (1883-1966) was one of the exponents of Indian Art. He came under the influence of Abanindranath Tagore and after training joined Rabindranath's Santiniketan and later became the Director of Kalabhavan from 1919 to 1952. He decorated the "Basu Bijnan Mandir" at the invitation of J. C. Bose. His famous paintings are "Uma's penance", "the Great Departure of fine Pandavas" etc. He also wrote "*Silpa-charcha*" and "*Rupa-vali*". A harmonious development of the East and West has taken place through the complementary efforts of Abanindranath and Nandalal, the preceptor and the disciple.

#### (f) *Men of letters*

##### 1. *Indo-Anglian*

In the early days Bengali was looked upon as a language of fishermen. And attention was fixed on English. So, the elite amongst the Bengalis considered it a matter of pride if they could write poetry or fiction in English. In its wake came "Indian writing

in English". As observed by Sir Thomas Munro before British Parliament in 1873 : "If civilisation were ever to become an article of trade between the two countries, England would greatly benefit by the import cargo". To denote this cargo the term used in 1883 in "Specimen compositions from Native Students" was Indo-Anglian. A brief review of this literature is attempted below.

*Taru Dutt* (1856-77) was a notable poet in those days. She is remembered for 'poetolatry' rather than for 'poetry'. The poetry is the thing wanted, but the poet too compels attention. It is her potentialities or possibilities that elevate and depress us. Translations from 70/80 French poets, named "A sheet gleaned in French Field" was published in 1876. The romantic favour, the feeling for freedom and melancholy and the magic are caught here. And Gossee said of it : "If modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be found impossible to reconstruct a great number of poems from this Indian version". The next is Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909), who wrote both in English and Bengali. His translations of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* by reducing the 48,000 lines of the one and 2 lakhs of the other into 4000 lines each built up his reputation. The 7 kandas of the *Ramayana* and 18 parvas of the *Mahabharata* became alike 12 books. Dutt felt that the metre adopted by Tennyson in his *Locksley Hall* is the ideal English equivalent to the *anustuph metre* of the Indian ethics.

*Sri Aurobindo* (1872-1950) is an outstanding figure in Indo-Anglian literature. He wrote blank verse plays like *Perseus the deliverer* based on a Greek myth, *Vasavadutta* on an Indian tale and the like. According to him the supramental consciousness will facilitate the creation on earth of the home of a diminished humanity. In *The Future of Poetry* he extended the frontiers of the poetry of the Supramental age. Poetry would then become the pure— in the words of Abbe Bremond "a mystic incantation allied to prayer". The Vedic or Upanishadic *mantra* has this peculiar poetry. And Sri Aurobinda's *Rose of God*, *Thought the Parade* and *The Bird of Fire* are a foretaste of this future poetry. His epic is *Savitri : A legend and a symbol*—it is in three parts, in 12 Books or 49 cantos, making up a total of 24,000 lines. Of the projected 51 cantos the last in Book VII (The Book of Death)

are missing. The epic is thus apparently incomplete, yet one reads it at one spell and is struck by the rounded fullness of the poem. Savitri is the symbol of the true wife's devotion and power, while Satyavan is Truth. Now beauty, love and power attuned to Truth can achieve anything. In Sri Aurobindo's "World-transforming Yoga", mind is transformed into supermind, earthnature transcended by supernature and earth-life by life divine. He chose Satyavan and Savitri as hero and heroine since his epic is one of the evolving soul. In recent years Oneil Biswas has added 'Squaring the circle' (1985). Here is mathematics made poetry, e.g., "God becomes 'pi times consciousness squared', that is IIC- or the Vedantic Brahman".

## 2. Bengali

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73) was the brightest star of young Bengal. Among his colleagues were Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Rajnarain Basu, Gourdas Bysack etc. While reading in the Hindu College, his poems appeared in 'Literary Blossom', 'Bengal Spectator' etc. He embraced Christianity. On the advice of his friends he began writing in Bengali. And within a short time he introduced 'blank verse' in his epic named '*Meghnadvadh Kavya*' and also 'Sonnet' in his 14-line verses. This is unique. Then came Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94), the novelist. He wrote 14 novels, the first being *Durgesh-Nandini*. His '*Vandana Math*' came out in 1882. The hymn in it, "Bande Mataram" became the slogan for India's freedom struggle with the British. Though Rabindranath's "Janaganamana" is now the National Anthem, 'Bande Mataram' enjoys equal status and respect with it.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913 with his *Gitanjali* (song offering). He was the first Asian to have this honour. He has left his mark on almost all the art forms of literature-song, poetry, novel, short story, drama, essay etc.—and even on painting. Then came Sarat Chandra Chatterjee (1876-1938) with his novels and short stories. He was a prolific writer and his books were all widely acclaimed. His revolutionary book, 'Pather Dabi' was banned by the British Government. Girish Chandra Ghosh (1844-1912) brought in the theatreland. In 1872 he founded the National Theatre with the help of the elite Calcuttans. It was the first of the professional Bengali theatres and the first play staged on it was "*Nil Darpan*"

written by Dinabandhu Mitra (1830-73) on indigo-planters. He was a successful actor as well as a good play-writer. He introduced a new variant of blank verse called 'Gairish Chhanda' in his mythological plays. Of the plays some are *Jana*, *Prafulla*, *Siraj-ud-daula* etc. On seeing his *Chaitanyalila*, Ramakrishna Paramhansa blessed him. Another actor of note was Sisir Kumar Bhaduri (1889-1959). He passed M. A. examination in 1913. In 1912 Rabindranath's 'Baikunther Khata' was produced on the University Institute stage and Sisir Kumar appeared in the role of Kedar. Rabindranath saw it and remarked : "Kedar is the object of my envy. Once I had a name in that role". On 6 August, 1924 'Sita' of Jogesh Chowdhury was staged in Natyaman-dir and innovations were introduced everywhere. On seeing this Amritlal Mitra said : "Sisirkumar is the pioneer of a new age in theatre".

In the studies of language mention may be made of Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (1890-1977). He was Professor of Linguistics and Phonetics in the Calcutta University from 1922 to 1952. He has written in Bengali and English many books, the most famous of which is "The origin and development of Bengali language" (1926). His 'Bhasatatwer Bhumika' (Introduction to the theory of the Bengali Language) was published in 1936 and 'Bangla Bhasaprasange' (on the Bengali theory of the Bengali language, in 1975. They throw light on the intricacies of the Bengali language. Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) also deserves mention. He joined the 49th Bengali Regiment as a soldier and the regiment was disbanded in 1920 after the First World War (1914-18). He could compose songs and sing them. He popularised *Gazal* in Bengali. He wrote more than 3000 songs. He was the mouthpiece of non-cooperation movement sponsored by Gandhi in vigorous language. His poem *Vidrohi* (rebel) illustrates this

#### VI. Mass media

(a) *Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones*—Lord Clive introduced the postal system in 1766 for official purposes. The postal service was first thrown open to the public in 1837. A postal department was set up under a Postmaster General named Red-furn. The General Post Office (GPO) at the time was located at old Post office Street. In 1854 the first postage stamp on an All India basis was issued. On 20 November, 1884 postal rates were

notified for despatch of articles to different places. Thus the rates were one anna, two annas, three annas and seven annas for Hooghly, Burdwan, Bhagalpur and Benaras respectively. The Postal Index Number (PIN) was introduced in 1972 for efficient and correct handling of mail.

For speedy communication especially to aid navigation, Dr. W. B. O. Shaughnessy, Surgeon and Professor of Chemistry at the Calcutta Medical College was authorised in 1851 to construct experimental Telegraph lines along the Hooghly between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour in the south. The receiving Station was operated by Salmonslope. Two other stations—Kubrahati and Khagaree (Khejuri) was added to the system next year. But the Morse Code was introduced in 1857.

India had a 50-line telephone exchange in Calcutta in 1881 only 5 years after the invention of telephone by Graham Bell. There were about 120 subscribers. In 1884 the service was extended to the other side of the Hooghly to Howrah and in 1892 to Budge Budge on the South-West of the city. By 1900 there were about 825 phone subscribers. In 1921 the big central Exchange was opened at 8, Hare Street and in 1924 two more exchanges—one in Burrabazar and the other in Alipur—were added. At Park Circus one Exchange was set up in 1929. These were all managed by Girl operators. And by 1936-37 the number of phone subscribers rose to 15 000. After the Second World War Exchanges were made automatic. There are now 27 major Auto Exchanges, 9 minor Auto Exchanges and 3 Manual Exchanges in the Calcutta Metropolitan area including Chinsurah and Chandannagore. Trunk-dialling is possible from Calcutta to big cities like Bombay, Delhi etc.

#### (b) *Radio and Television*

Radio broadcasts started in India in 1927 with a privately-owned transmitters at Calcutta and Bombay. The Government of India took them over in 1930 and started operating them under the name of Indian Broadcasting Service. In 1936 the name was changed to All India Radio. And since 1957 it was known as Akashvani and made a separate department.

The Television set-up was delinked from All India Radio on April 1, 1976, and given the name *Doordarshan*. The general Service in TV was first introduced in Calcutta in 1975. India's



own communication Satellite "Apple" was put in Geo-Stationary orbit (36000 km above Earth) over Sumatra at 102° East longitude on July 16, 1981. The first *live* TV transmission connecting Calcutta was carried out through this satellite on 13 August, 1981 with an interview with the Prime Minister of India. Colour TV started in 1982.

(c) *Newspapers and Journals*

The "Indian Gazette" was the newspaper that came out in 1774. It was the mouthpiece of the Government. On 29 January, 1780 J. A. Hickey started publication of the 'Bengal Gazette'. The weekly journal—*Bengal Harkaru*—was published on October 4, 1795 by the oriental star organisation. A bi-weekly, the *Relator* came out on 4 April, 1799. The Government's weekly—*Calcutta Gazette* was established in 1784. The first monthly journal—*Calcutta Magazine and Oriental Museum*—was published by White from 51, Cossaitola (Bentinck) Street in Lalbazar area. A daily—*John Bull in the East*—came out on July 2, 1821. It became *John Bull* from 1833 and the *Englishman* since 1834. Derozio published a daily called *East Indian* on June 1, 1831. The *Friend of India* and the *Statesman* appeared in April, 1818. The *Indian Daily News* was incorporated with the *Bengal Harakaru* on 18 August, 1864. The 'Indian Mirror' came out in 1861. The *Bengalee* came out as a weekly in 1861. The *Indian Nation* came into being in 1882. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* was originally a Bengali language paper published on 20 February, 1868. On March 21, 1878 it transformed itself into an English paper. On February 19, 1891 it became a daily newspaper.

In 1816 Gangakishore Bhattacharyya bought out in Bengali. The *Bengal Gazette*. *Digdarshan* was the first Bengali monthly published in April, 1818. Then came *Samachar durpan* on 23 May, 1818. By 1830 Calcutta had 13 Bengali newspapers. On 28 January, 1831 Iswar Gupta, the poet started his *Sambad Prabhakkar* as a weekly. Since, 14 June, 1839 it became a daily. From 1853 a monthly edition started coming out. The *Somaprakash* was started on 15 November, 1858 under the editorship of Pandit Dwarkanath Vidyabhusan of Sanskrit College. The *Barnabodhini Patrika* was published in 1863, lasted for about 60 years. The *Bangabhasi* and the *Sanjibani* were published in 1881 and 1883 respectively. They became popular as dailies. The

*Saptahik Basumati* was published in 1896. The two most important Bengali magazines—*Bangadarshan* and *Bharati*—made their appearance in 1872 and 1877 respectively under the editorship of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Dwijendranath Tagore. The *Sudhana* appeared in 1891 with Sudhindranath Tagore as editor and then under Rabindranath's editorship. Suresh Chandra Samajpati brought out *Sahitya* in 1890. The *Udbodhan*, the mouthpiece of the Ramkrishna Mission came out in 1899.

During the 19th century the Press legislation had been repressive. In 1799 by an order promulgated during Lord Wellesley's regime, every newspaper was required to send a copy to Government before publication. This order remained in force till 1818, when it was replaced by certain directives for the guidance of the editors. However, John Adam member of the Governor-Generals' Council issued a harsh Press ordinance on 14 March, 1823. It required the owner, editor and publisher of a newspaper to take a licence from Government prior to publication. Rammohan Roy's appeal to the King-in-council against the ordinance failed. The ordinance remained for 12 years. In 1870 a new section (124A) was inserted in the Indian Penal Code to stop publication of seditious writings. Lord Lytton (1876-80) took a hard line and the Vernacular Press Act was passed in 1878. Under it the Government could punish seriously the editor, printer and publisher of a Bengali newspaper without recourse to court. A strong agitation started against the Act. Lord Ripon revoked the Act in 1882. However, in 1889 a new Act came, that is, the Official Secrets Act.

With the 20th century came *Modern Review* in 1907 with Ramananda Chatterjee as editor. Aurobindo's *Karmayogin* (1909) and Subhas Chandra Bose's *Forward Block* (1939) were weeklies. Of the dailies the following deserve mention : C. R. Das's *Forward* (1923), and Suresh Chandra Majumdar's (1888-1954) *Hindusthan Standard* (1937). The latter ceased publication in 1978. Published in 1884 under the title, '*Statesman and friend of India*', the paper continued till 1922 and in 1923 the name was changed to *the Statesman*. In regard to the Bengali periodicals *Sandhya* (1904) by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya may be mentioned as a daily. The *Anandabazar Patrika* as a daily came out in 1922 under Suresh Chandra Majumdar ; the daily *Jugantar* in 1937. *Dhumketu* was a fortnightly published

in 1922 by Kazi Nazrul Islam. *Basumati* (1896) and *Desh* (1933) continued as weekly. The following monthlies deserve mention, namely, *Prabasi* (1901) by Ramananda Chatterjee (1865-1943), *Bharatbarsa* (1913) by Jaladhar Sen (1860-1939), *Narayana* (1914) by C. R. Das (1870-1925), *Sabuj-patra* (1914) by Pramatha Chowdhury (1868-1946), *Manasi O' Marmabani* (1915) by Jagadindranath Roy (1868-1926), *Parichaya* (1931), by Sudhindranath Datta (1901-60), *Sami-barer Chithi* (1924-1927) by Sajanikant Das (1900-62), *Kellol* (1923) by Dineschandra Das and *Kali Kalam* (1926) by Premendra Mitra and Sailajananda Mukherjee.<sup>20</sup>

## VII. Hospitals

Even at the distant date, 1709, Calcutta appears to have been provided with a good hospital, but Hamilton says of it : "Many go into it, and undergo the penance of physic, but few come out to give an account of its operation". This indicates that the medical faculty was then not held in much esteem.<sup>21</sup> And the rudiments of hospital facilities were available at Garstin Place near St. John's Church. Later the hospital was removed to a place in 1768 to the south of the maidan. This house belonged to Rev J. Z. Kiernander. With the addition of two more buildings and the remodelling of the old in 1795, it was named the Presidency General Hospital. Thereafter it became Seth Sukhlal Karnani Memorial Hospital because of the donation made by Karnani. Here was discovered by Ross, the Nobel Laureate, the malarial parasite from *Anopheles*. A description of this Hospital has already been given.

The Mayo Hospital, originally called native Hospital, was established in September, 1792 by Rev. John Owen. It was originally located in Dharmatollah and then shifted to Chitpur Road area. It stands now on the Strand Road—its number of beds was 185. It has now fallen on evil days.

A Native Medical Institution was set up in 1824 and Native doctors used to be trained there till 1835 when a Medical College was founded. Surgeon M. J. Bramley was appointed Principal

in August 1835 and Surgeon H. H. Goodene Professor of Medicine and Anatomy. Madhu Sudan Gupta was the first Bengal teacher of Anatomy to carry out in 1836 the dissection on a dead body with 4 of his students including Rajkrishna De. The foundation stone was laid by Lord Dalhousie on 30 September, 1848 and the College was opened on December 1, 1852. In July 1882 Sir Ashley Eden opened a new Wing in the Medical College Hospital for Indian women and children. It is named after him.

The Campbell Hospital (now Nil Ratan Sarkar Hospital) was started as a Pauper Hospital in the 19th century. It was jointly maintained by the State Government and the Calcutta Municipality. It is situated in the south of Sealdah Railway Station. After Independence it has been named the Nil Ratan Sarkar Hospital.

The Albert Victor Hospital (now R. G. Kar Medical) was originally the Calcutta School. 15 years later the name—Albert Victor—was conferred on it. The Secretary, Dr. R. G. Kar in the latter part of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century made it a big hospital through his efforts. It then became known as Carmichael Medical College and Hospital. After Dr. Kar's death and Independence, it is renamed R. G. Kar Hospital. It is situated at 1, Belgachia Road.

At 11, Elgin Road is situated the Sambhunath Pandit Hospital with 250 beds. The Chittaranjan Hospital was built in 1972 to perpetuate the memory of Deshbandhu C. R. Das at 24, Gora-chand Road, Entally. It has 200 beds. There is the Chittaranjan Seva Sadan, opposite the Asutosh College. It is now mainly a cancer hospital and also a hospital for women and children. The Rani Krishna Mission Seva Pratishthan is a very big hospital to the south of the Hazra Road-Sarat Bose Road junction, there is a Maternity Home called Matri Seva Sadan, located at the Southern Avenue. And there are other hospitals run by different organisations.<sup>22</sup>

## VIII. *Architecture and Sculpture*

### (a) *Architecture*

A description of a number of noteworthy buildings is attempted below :

22. Roy, B. op cit., 106-10.

1. *The Victoria Memorial Hall*—On the death of Queen Victoria (1901) the then Governor-General, Lord Curzon planned the construction of a Memorial Hall. The plan was drawn up by Sir William Emerson, President of the Royal Institute of British architects. The construction is a good example of Italian Renaissance with traces of Saracenic influence. It cost about a crore and 5 lakhs of rupees. The construction was started in 1904 and completed in 1921 except the four domes on the four sides, which were put up in 1934. The Makrana white marble used for the Taj at Agra was used here also, but its design was different. The architecture is Indo-European. The structure is 333 feet long and 238 feet wide. Its height at the top of the main dome is 184 feet. On the top of this dome stands a revolving bronze statue of Victory, which is 16 feet high and weighs over 80 maunds. The entire structure is shaped by 'H', the two ends of which are connected with curved colonnades. In the Queen's Hall just below the main dome stands a statue of Queen Victoria.<sup>24</sup>

2. *The Bose Research Institute*—This Institute was founded by Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937), the eminent scientist and opened to the public on 30 November, 1917. To pursue the methods of research he invented the Balanced Crescograph for measuring the growth of plants. Its magnifying power is one lakh times. One of his discoveries was that plants and animals are governed by the same fundamental laws of Nature. An equally momentous discovery was the demonstration of the dual nervous impulse in plants. The Institute has in the main building a lecture hall that can accommodate 1500 people and a museum with a bronze bust of its founder and various instruments used for his experiments. A second building at a short distance from the main one contains the library and laboratory for Botany and Physics. Behind lies a garden wherein the great-research scholar conducted his experiments.

*The Birla Planetarium*—This unique structure in Calcutta owes its inception to the Birla Education Trust (1929) which put the proposal to the West Bengal Government. The Government allotted to the Trust about 3½ bighas of land on a 999-years' lease. It is situated near the Crossing of Chowringhee Road and

Shakespeare Sarani as well as adjacent to the Maidan. It consists of a single-storied circular structure in the style of Indian architecture—it was designed by the architects, Ballardie Thompson and Mathews and constructed by M/s. M. L. Dalmiya & Co. Ltd. The central dome with a diameter of 82 feet follows the shape of the Buddhist Stupa of Sanchi. There is an art gallery and a library of maps, books, magazines and other relevant data on Astronomy. The central hall is air-conditioned with the equipment worth Rs. 2 lakhs. And the construction cost Rs. 10 lakhs. The Universal Planetarium Projector with its accessories consisting of 29,000 parts has been supplied by the Vebcarl Zeiss Jena of East Germany at a cost of Rs. 6 lakhs. At a cost of Rs. 2½ lakhs, the Dome has been equipped. The projector with its parts portrays on the perforated inner ceiling the world of space studded with stars and planets orbiting their endless course. To the spectator it appears as if he were gazing at the heavens from the roof of his house. The total cost is about Rs. 22 lakhs. It was opened to the public on 29 September, 1962. It is the first in India and the fourth in Asia.

4. *The Mahajati Sadan*—This is situated at 164, Chittaranjan Avenue. It owes its origin to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose; it was named by Rabindranath Tagore, who laid the foundation stone of the building. Its hall is adorned with portraits of the country's patriots and martyrs. And it is used for musical, artistic and cultural functions.<sup>4</sup>

5. *Skyscrapers*—Recently skyscrapers have come to the metropolis. The 13-storied building of the West Bengal Government's New Secretariat at 2/3, K. S. Roy Street and the Metro Rail Bhavan on Chowringhee are illustrations. Besides, multi-storied structures are being built to accommodate "apartment" owners.

<i>Identity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Material used</i>	<i>Sculptor</i>
1. Rabindranath Tagore	Rabindra Sadan Courtyard	Bronze	Kartick Pal
2. Do	Academy of Fine Arts	Concrete	Salim Munshi
3. Mahatma Gandhi	Gurunanak Sarani Crossing	Bronze	Debiprosad Raichowdhury
4. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose	East corner of Rajbhavan	Do	Prodosh Dasgupta
5. Do	Shyambazar 5-point Crossing	Do	A Bombay Sculptor
6. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan	In front of Akashvani Bhavan	Do	Ramesh Pal
7. Surendranath Banerjee	Curzon Park	Do	Debiprosad Rai Chowdhury
8. Kshudiram Bose	S.W. Corner of Bidhansabha Bhavan	Do	Tapas Datta
9. Swami Vivekananda	Gol Park	White marble	Mani Pal
10. Asutosh Mukherjee	Crossing of Chowringhee & Chittaranjan Ave.	Bronze	Debiprosad Rai Chowdhury

On the quality of these statues, the famous sculptor, Chintamani Kar, Principal of the Art School has thus observed : "When statues of national leaders or famous men are placed at the centre of a city, they only reflect faithfully the physical features of the persons concerned, the sculptures are lifeless and devoid of personality and become more like taxidermy than a work of art.<sup>25</sup> And this is illustrated by the statue of Swami Vivekananda at the Golpark.

The Gandhi Statue rises 11 feet in height and is set on a pedestal of sand stone 13 feet high. It stands in the centre of an encl-

25. Majumdar, *op. cit.*, Part II, 516-18.

sure surrounded by a well-kept lawn and spot-lights which illuminate at night. It depicts the great leader toiling along a rough path covered with thorns and brambles. The fragile and lonely figure, as in life, appears weak and emaciated. The sculptor, Debiprosad Rai Chowdhury was inspired by Rabindranath's injunction to the Mahatma on the eve of the latter's Civil Disobedience Movement : "If no one responds to your call, march alone." On the pedestal of the statue is the following inscription, one of the sayings of the Mahatma himself :

"In the midst of death life persists ;  
In the midst of untruth truth persists ;  
In the midst of darkness light persists ;  
Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth and Love".

## IX *Fighting for freedom*

### (a) *Freedom-seekers*

The British Raj operated in two ways—indirectly and directly. In the first stage the East India Company acted as the middleman. In this period the Company passed from a mercantile power to a territorial possession. And then they ruled till 1858 when the British Crown took it over and the second stage set in. It was at this stage that the national struggle for independence began after the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857. The middle class emerged with the spread of English education. And the Indian National Congress was established by a retired civilian, A. O. Hume. Its first session was presided over by a Calcuttan named Woomesh Chunder Banerjee (1844-1906). He was a liberal in his political views. He did not visualise the full independence of India.

Surendranath Banerjee (1841-1925) had troubles over his admission in England to the Indian Civil Service. However, he was ultimately taken to the service, but dismissed in 1874. He founded the Ripon College named after him. He became a real force in politics. Twice he became the President of the National Congress in 1895 and 1902. He opposed the partition of Bengal but was against terrorism and violence. He was responsible for the re-organisation of the Calcutta Corporation. His autobiography is named 'A Nation in making'.

Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) worked for the Congress. He was in prison several times. Twice he was elected President of the



Indian National Congress—once in 1923 and the second time in 1940. He continued as President till 1946 as no election could be held because of the imprisonment of a large number of Congress men in connection with the *Quit India Movement* (1942). He negotiated with the British Cabinet Mission in 1946. And independence came in the wake of the partition of India. After Independence he became the Education Minister. He wrote a controversial book—“*India wins freedom*” (1959).

Bepin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) embraced Brahmoism. He did not agree with Tilak's concept of Hindu nationalism but preached a “composite patriotism”. In 1906 he started a daily called ‘*Banda Mataram*’, whose editor was Aurobindo, “a stormy petrel in Bengal politics”. During his sojourn in England (1908-11) he developed the empire-idea, wherein the British empire should be a federal union in which India and Great Britain and other self-governing colonies would cooperate as equal and free partners. He proclaimed complete independence long before the Congress accepted it as its goal.

Chittaranjan Das (1870-1925) was inspired by Surendranath Banerjee, a member of the Anushilan Samiti of the Bengal Revolutionaries and in touch with Aurobindo Ghosh and his journal, *Bande Mataram*. He defended Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb case (1908) and got his acquittal. He has been conferred the title ‘*Deshbandhu*’ (friend of the country) by people because of his generosity. He wanted “Swaraj for the masses, not for the classes”. He formed the Swaraj party. In 1916 he started a literary monthly journal named *Narayan*. He donated this house on which now stands Chittaranjan Seva Sadan. Tagore wrote of him : “By penance did you bring in a deathless life/On your death have you gifted away that life”.

Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945) was inspired by Swami Vivekananda. In 1920 he stood 4th in the Indian Civil Service Examination in England but did not accept the appointment under the British. He worked for the total boycott of the Prince of Wales in Calcutta in 1921. He was arrested and sent to Mandalay jail under Regulation III of 1818 on the charge that he had been associated with the terrorists. In 1927 he was released on medical grounds. He was opposed to the traditional Congress policy formulated by Gandhi, who therefore did not approve of the

nomination of Subhas as the President of the Congress. Yet he was returned twice in 1938 and 1939. On the historic "Independence Day", January 26, 1941 Subhas had disappeared from his house. He reached Berlin and began his broadcasts from there since January 1942. He left Germany and with the cooperation of the Japanese Govt. arrived in Singapore on July 2, 1943. Two days after he took over from Rashbehary Bose the leadership of the Indian Independence Movement in East Asia, organised the Azad Hind Fouj (the Indian National Army). He became the Army's Supreme Commandar on August 25 and proclaimed the Provisional Govt. of Azad Hind on October 21. He was hailed as Netaji by the Army and the Indian people there. This Army subsequently advanced upto Kohima and Imphal, where the Indian National flag was hoisted for the first time. He is reported to have been killed in an Air-crash over Taiwan (Formosa) on August 18, 1945.

Bidhan Chandra Roy (1882-1962) missed his M. B. Degree owing to some dispute with a European professor and within 6 months passed the L.M.S. examination in 1906 and in two years thereafter won his M.D. He went to England and was admitted to the St. Bartholomew's Institution in 1909. And within about 2 years he passed both the M.R.C.P. (London) and F.R.C.S. (England), being placed first in the former. After C.R. Das's death he became the Deputy leader of the Swaraja Party in the Legislative Council. The Big Five of Bengal—Sarat Chandra Bose, Nirmal Chandra Chunder, Tulsi Chandra Goswami, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar and Bidhanchandra Roy—guided Bengal politics at the time. He became the Chief Minister of Bengal in 1948 and remained so till his death. He donated his house to a Trust catering to the medical relief to the suffering humanity.

Freedom-seekers are many and in various fields. Narendranath Bhattacharyya, later known by his assumed name in 1916, M. N. Roy (1887-1954), i.e., Manabendranath Roy, made his mark in revolutionary activities. That is why, Lenin once called him "the symbol of Revolution in the East". Among his Indian contemporaries he was peerless. He broke away from the committee. In 1939 the Radical Democratic Party was formed by him. His political writings show maturity by any standard. He came to realise after his communistic activities that "Communism is not

the horoscope of the world". He pleaded for a new humanism in his "Reason, Romanticism and Revolution" (1955).

Another freedom-seeker was Mukunda Behari Mullick (1888-1974). He fought against casteism throughout his life. He was an M.A.B.L. and a practising advocate. He joined the Cabinet formed to implement the Govt. of India Act, 1935. He was for the liberation of the Depressed Classes. By establishing Debt Settlement Boards he was able to scale down the debts of the peasants. This work revealed him as a mature economist of a high order.

#### (b) *British rulers*

The Calcutta Settlement had its first President of Fort William in Sir Charles Eyre. This continued till the post was converted into that of a Governor. And Robert Clive became the first Governor of Fort William. The last Governor in the line was Warren Hastings (1772-74). Then he became the Governor-General of Fort William under the Regulating Act of 1773 from 20 October, 1774. And this line continued till the Charter Act of 1833. The first Governor-General of India under it was Lord William Cavendish Bentinck from July 4, 1828. And it continued till the Crown's take-over in 1858. And the first Governor-General and Viceroy was Lord Canning since November 1, 1858. This continued at Calcutta with Lord Hardinge upto 31 March, 1912. Then the capital was shifted to New Delhi.

The Charter Act of 1853 created Lt. Governor for Bengal Presidency and the first incumbent was Sir F. J. Halliday (1854). This line continued till April 1, 1912 when the office of the Lt. Governor of Bengal was abolished and Bengal raised to a Governorship. And the first Governor of the Presidency of Fort William was Lord Carmichael. This continued till 15 August 1947 when India became independent with C. Rajagopalachari as the first Indian Governor. A list of Governors-General and of Lt. Governors and Governors is given in App. C.

#### (c) *Independence and after*

India became free on 15 August, 1947 in accordance with the Indian Independence Act, 1947. The Government of India Act, 1935 was modified and adapted by the India (Provisional Con-

stitution) order, 1947 made by the Governor-General on 14 August, 1947. And this continued till the Constitution of India came into force from 26 January, 1950.

The Constituent Assembly of the Indian Union met in Delhi on the night of August 14. In an atmosphere tense with excitement Nehru addressed the members: "At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history. When we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance". The Assembly then appointed Lord Mountbatten the first Governor-General of the Dominion. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Assembly gave a reply to Lord Mountbatten's address; "While our achievement is in no small measure due to our own sufferings and sacrifices, it is also the result of world forces and events and, last though not least, it is the consummation and fulfilment of the historic tradition and democratic ideals of the British race". At present the administration is being carried on according to the Constitution of India.<sup>26</sup> The Governor of West Bengal remains at Calcutta while the President of India at New Delhi after replacing the former Governor-General.

In this context the Independence Act, 1947 is important. It shows that this Independence came by way of "the progressive realisation of responsible government in India" as visualised in the Preamble to the Govt. of India Act, 1919 (9 & 10 Geo. 5 ch. 181). The Independence Act was the culmination of the British Policy. But unfortunately some people fail to appreciate this. As a result they, like Dr. Subodh Chandra Sengupta, fly in fancy to the empyrean and state: "Subhaschandra Bose wrested freedom from the British and left it to others to unfurl the National Flag on the Red Fort". The word, "wrest" is to be marked—here 'force' is necessary, whereas the *Independence Act*, shuts it out. Hence the naming of the book 'India wrests freedom' (1982) is inappropriate. On the other hand Azad's book '*India wins Freedom*' (1959) suits the occasion better.

26. Majumdar, R. C.—"Struggle for freedom, in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. II at 791.

**X. *Water, power and transport* -****(a) *Water***

The supply of filtered water per capita in the Calcutta metropolis is inadequate as already pointed out. Drainage has been a problem that appears to defy solution. This has been due to the "haphazard urban expansion of the city, blocking Cutfall Channels and effecting what little natural drainage is available". During the monsoon a 2-to-3-hour downpour turns the streets into canals. The waters remain stagnant for days together and pose health hazards. The existing sewers and conduit pipes can cope only with one-third of the city as it was in 1906. Since then the population has jumped from one million to 9.5 million even to about 11 million now. The situation recalls the description of an English poet as if he had the Calcutta situation in mind about 200 years ago when he wrote :

Water, water everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink ;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.

But the supply of drinking water tells a different story. In 1931 Calcutta provided 52 gallons of filtered water per day to each of the Calcuttans. The pressure was so great that houses of 2 or 3 floors did not require any electric pump. By 1965 the daily supply per head fell to 25 gallons per head. Now for a population of about 11 million there is a daily supply of only 150 million gallons. There was a cholera epidemic of 1958 and the World Health Organisation laid the blame at the door of bad water. The WHO estimated Calcutta requirements at 60 gallons of water per head per day. However, the CMDA fixed a target of 40. But this was too ambitious. Then the CMDA came down to 20. But this too remains a dream, for averages are deceptive. Thus Alipore might have 100 gallons while Tiljala only 5. And the problem still remains a problem defying solution. 235 big diameter tubewells supply 111 million litres per day and 6,500 small diameter tubewells 35 million litres. Besides, Pulta supplies 712 million litres of filtered water per day. This gives 858 million litres per day.

**(b) Power**

There are three agencies to supply electricity to the metropolises, namely, The Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation, The West Bengal State Electricity Board and the Damodar Valley Corporation. Together they cannot meet the City's demand for 530 MW in the morning peak hour at 11 A.M. and for 590-600 MW in the evening peak hour at 7 P.M. In 1982 the average shortfall in power was 111.34 MW. Recently there has been an addition of 270 MW—210 MW at Bandel unit and 60 MW at Titagar—but this has only a marginal effect of increase. Hence is the problem of load-shedding. In recent years Kolaghat with its total capacity of 630 MW has come into stream with no resultant improvement in the situation. Naturally, a question arises : what is this load-shedding due to ? The answer must be found, not in the installed capacity of the plants, but in their PLF, i.e. Plant Loading Factor. As reported in the Newspapers, the All India average is 52% whereas it is here only 38%. And this has further deteriorated in recent months. The *Statesman* has recently reviewed the position : the installed capacity is about 3,100 MW, whereas the demand in peak hours has risen to about 1,000 MW. Yet there is load-shedding. This means that the average of 38% PLF has gone down to less than 30%. And the credit for this must go to the employees' work ethics and the management of the administrators.

**(b) Transport**

Then there is the problem of transport. The Motor vehicles of The Calcutta District on 31 December, 1982 (as gathered from the West Bengal Govt's P. V. Department) were as follows : (1) Lorry—21,206 ; (2) Van + Tempo—6,313 ; (3) Van + Jeep—90,727 ; (4) Motor-Cycle and Scooter—57,690 ; (5) Taxi—7,538 ; (6) State carriage—3,256 ; (7) Contract carriage—2,191 ; (8) Mini Bus—642 ; (9) Tractor—2,934—total 1,92,498. Recently, the auto-rickshaws have also come to ply. The total number of vehicles registered is 1.37 lakhs, of which private cars account for .72 lakhs, which is 54 percent of the total. There are 2,799 buses including 500 mini buses, 300 trams and other vehicles.

Secondly, there is also the State Transport Corporation. It runs

buses over the City's 69 routes (1981-82) and on long distance routes 58. The total number of vehicles on 31 March, 1983 was 1,653. The Corporation puts the number of vehicles per day on an average on the roads thus : City—597 (1981-2) ; long distance—126. The number of employes comes to 13,311. The total number of passengers comes to 302,300('000) (1981-2) ; long distance—6,800('000). The total earnings came to Rs. 154 crores (1979-80). showing a profit of Rs. 1,57,600.

The third is the Calcutta Tramways Company Ltd. It had 438 tram cars and 10 miscellaneous cars in 1981-2 and 27 routes. On an average 280 vehicles were put on the roads and they carried 2,570 lakhs. The number of persons employed per day was 9,110 (1981-82), and the total earnings came to Rs. 642 lakhs (1981-2) with the loss of Rs. 889.45 lakhs.

The Indian Railways entered the Metro age with the Calcutta's Metro Rail in 1984-5 from Esplanade to Bhowanipur—a distance of 3.5 kms that connects 5 stations. Now it goes upto Esplanade. The projected length from Tollygunge to Dum Dum is 16.43 km. The number of stations is as follows :—overground—2 ; underground—15, total being 17. There are 8 coaches per train, each coach measuring 19.50 metres in length and 2.75 metres in breadth. The highest speed is 80 km per hour, but the average speed is 30 km per hour. The electricity demand is 750 volts D.C. (53 MW—65 MVA). The time to travel from Tollygunge to Dum Dum is 33 minutes, while the Esplanade is 15 minutes. Each coach carries 54 (sitting) and 218 (standing) passengers ; each train is to carry about 2500 passengers. And the interval between trains is 2½ minutes.<sup>27</sup>

#### X. *Calcutta and town planning*

Kipling rightly pointed out that Calcutta had unplanned development. It had 'palace, byre, hovel-poverty and pride/Side by side'.<sup>28</sup> And this even now exists and shows no signs of abatement.

27. Roy, N. R.—Calcutta, 104, 118-22.

28. Kipling, R.—'A tale of two cities' in *A Selected Verse* (Penguin Re-print), 27.

(a) '*Poverty and Pride*'

Calcutta suffers from the ills of lop-sided development. As a result, the poor and the rich huddle together. The scene is one of the rich getting richer and the poor poorer.<sup>29</sup>

(i) *Poverty*

Calcutta's traffic strikes a new-comer as all unique. Trams grind round corners ; gypsy-green lorries move with 'Ta-ta and Bye-bye' ; taxis swerve all over the road with much blowing of horns ; rickshaws spring unexpectedly out of side streets ; bullock-carts sway ponderously along to the impediment of everyone ; and sacred Brahmani bulls and cows stroll down non-challantly the middle of the tram-tracks munching breakfast as they go. There is also a traffic in people hanging on to all forms of public transport.

There is first of all the beggars that a visitor encounters. Calcutta's beggary consists of 4 lakhs without a job. A woman with a sleeping child in her lap supplicates mournfully. There are children with tears and sobs and they cry, 'No mamma, no papa, paisa, paisa'. It is a pathetic sight. Beggars are of various kinds—some are mutilated for profit, some with leucoderma, and some with festering wounds. And beggar children flock to a new-comer as if he is a second Pied Piper. Secondly, come 70,000 street-sleepers. They prefer to sleep on a blanket in the open air of the streets to stifling in a slum. Often they construct on the streets lean-tos if in families, straw matting, odd bricks and wads of newspaper in a double-decker sequence of boxes. The dying destitutes may find shelter in Mother Teresa's Nirmal Hriday. Thirdly, there are about 40,000 lepers. Some are taken care of by Mother Teresa's nuns and others have a leper colony at Dhapa to the east of the city. And the destitutes and lepers represent the extremities of Calcutta's poverty.

Then there is the bustee—the huts are made of wattle with tiled roofs and mud floors. These are congested. A standing pipe provides for 125 people. Besides, there is the *Khatal*—it is a richman's method of stabling his cattle upon the premises of the poor. Every bustee has this. The bustee-dwellers are to put up



with the filth of these dozen beasts. There are other forms of slum or bustee. At Baranagar there is a jute mill having houses for its workers. The raw red brick with its patina of dirt welcomes the visitors. The workers' houses are two-storied and they have 630 rooms for 1500 people. One room in the ground floor is 10 ft. by 6 ft. and three men share it. The bustees have 17,000 service privies; the city has 40,000. The service privies are the beginnings of cholera and other gastro-intestinal disease in embryo; with the moonsoon the incidence of cholera rises. It is endemic and epidemic—in 1958 there were 4,900 cases and 1,765 deaths. And the worst is that there is not even a hospital bed for 1000. Since the famine of 1943 starvation has become a feature of Calcutta's life. The Reserve Bank of India has estimated (1970) that 70 per cent of the people live in absolute poverty by the calorific measurement. This is one of the reasons of suicide as well. In 1967, 4,682 people committed suicide; in 1968, this figure rose to 5,800.

## (ii) *Wealth*

Calcutta is a wealthy city as well as a squalidly poor one. And the two elements live close together and present grotesque contrasts. Thus it accommodates the Maharajas—of Cooch-Bihar, of Cossimbazar, of Mayurbhanj, and of Nattore. Then there is the wealth of the warehouse and the foundry, of the dockside and the banks. Calcutta is still the richest city in India—it is possibly the richest city as observed by Moorhouse, anywhere between Rome and Tokio in terms of the money accumulated and represented here. Between 1956-7 and 1966-7, Calcutta had 46.9% of Indian's exports and 30.4% of imports. It was here that in 1964 15% of manufacturing industry was based, 30% of banking business took place, and 30% of material bank revenue was produced. Despite her poverty Calcutta represents wealth. In the sixties the average annual income per head of population was Rs. 194 in Bihar, Rs. 259 in Orissa, Rs. 319 in Assam and Rs. 327 in West Bengal, while it was Rs. 811 in Calcutta. In this connection the income of the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation may be noted. The Corporation, a British firm, started generating power for the city in 1897. In 1965 the 'adjusted profits' (gross profits before deduction of depreciation and after deduction of debenture interest) were Rs. 5,132,000.

In 1969 they were £ 2,810,000 and this meant that there was a clear profit of £ 1,177,971 after subtraction of loans, interests and other encumbrances with a declaration of 9% divided. In 1970 the clear profit came to £ 7,87,301 in addition to donations worth £ 743 to the Charitable organisations in India. And Calcutta can, to quote Kipling,

Though the argosies of Asia at her doors  
Heap their stores,  
Through her enterprise and energy secure  
Income sure.

(iii) *A two-class phenomenon*

Calcutta still presents a three-class phenomenon—the upper; the middle; and the lower. Day by day the middle class is dwindling, it is being downgraded. In rare cases, some fortunate few can get to the upper tier. Very soon they will merge with the proletariat. And this has been evident from the sale of houses by some people of the middle class. Many of them go to non-Bengalis.

(iv) *The Metropolitan pattern*

Town planning follows three plans in building up a city or metropolis. There is, in the first place, "Grid" or chess-board plan" following cellular growth. It is a simple rectangle divided into square blocks for building, with streets intersecting at right angles. This Cartesian method has been adopted in Washington, USA. The second is the "Radiating Plan" based on natural growth. This is based on the "polar coordinates" method followed in Moscow. And the third is the "Spider" web" or the controlled growth method".<sup>6</sup> Dom Moraes had this in mind when he described Calcutta as "the spider city". But he is wrong, because Calcutta follows neither of the three methods above described. It may be seen that each of the methods has some plan behind it. And Calcutta has no truck with them. That is why it has been called unplanned.

## XII. *Will the megalopolis turn a necropolis?*

### (a) *"The city of dreadful night"*

From the very start Calcutta developed as an unplanned city. And this remained so while turning into a megalopolis. It contains within itself the seeds of decay and disaster. Thus Rudyard Kipling came out by describing it as a "city of dreadful night". Reiterating the same sentiment Moorhouse has also stated recently thus: "Almost everything associated with Calcutta is highly unpleasant and sometimes nasty indeed. It is bracketed in the western mind with distant rumours of appalling disaster, riot and degradation".<sup>31</sup> True is it that the western mind is very much agitated over this state of affairs. And D. Lapierre wants the colony of lepers and of human horses of rickshaw-pullers to be converted into a "City of Joy" (1986). Is it possible?

### (b) *The future answer*

Mumford has listed 6 causes of decay of cities. The first is hypertrophy—it is gigantism, that is, "a failure to maintain the human measure leading to social disintegration and a flight from reality". The second is the non-conforming use, i.e., the unplanned intrusion of industry in residential areas. The third is the physical decay of buildings. The fourth is the decay by misuse, that is, the domestic buildings are taken over for trade and industry. The fifth is the unplanned lowering of "class status". This is seen when good houses are abandoned for occupation by the poorer people. And the sixth is a flood of traffic, which destroys the quietness of residential quarters. By an analysis of urban decay through these 6 stages Mumford concludes that London is now in the penultimate stage of the megalopolis.<sup>32</sup> Judged by this yardstick Calcutta seems to be heading towards the last stage. This is an apocalyptic vision of the future that will make the Calcuttans recall to mind Virgil's words: *Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt*, i.e., human deeds have their tears and mortality touches the heart.<sup>33</sup>

However, the question is: Is the speculation valid? This plagued Moorhouse when his prophecy of plague and revolution

did not materialise and he began to speculate why. He predicted in 1971 about revolution thus: "In this haunting horror, the night comes when every poor man in the city rises from his pavement, and his squalid bustee and at last dispossesses the rich with crazy ferocity". But neither the cataclysmic plague has visited the city nor have the pavement poor risen with ferocity to dispose of the rich in angry blood even in 1983, twelve years after. He discovered the westerner's fallacy in judging the conditions of Calcutta by his own standard. He realised the mistake in his underrating "Calcutta's enduring capacity for survival in the face of difficulties that might destroy the will to survive in a civilised fashion in any western community".<sup>34</sup> The two expressions—'capacity for survival' and 'civilised fashion'—make Calcutta different from any 'western' city. That's why Moorhouse's prophecy failed. But there is a limit beyond which the survival capacity cannot endure. To keep the megalopolis within these limits, Herculean efforts are needed on the part of the Calcuttans. And this means leadership compounded of four elements, namely consciousness, coherence, constancy, and conscientiousness. They may collectively be called 'c'. The first senses the principles and ends. Modern government needs this consciousness called 'nationality' that engenders a will above that of its individuals. This is a corporate personality. And the idea can be well brought out in the words of Maitland thus: "If N men unite themselves in an organised body, Jurisprudence, unless it wishes to pulverise the group, must so N+1 persons". In this coherence brings in all agencies of government for a concerted action to achieve a common end. Constancy connotes steadiness of vision and demeanour and attachment to rightness of policy, while conscientiousness harmonises the other three elements with the people's will.<sup>35</sup> So the corporate personality stands on these four pillar elements. In other words, the masses (m) are the people and the leader is to combine the four elements denoted by c. In this context, leadership (L) consists in the energy released by the masses. Mathematically  $L = mc^2$ .

To prevent the decay and destruction of Calcutta, the Calcuttans need leadership as described above. And this means that they must have character. As observed by President Rajendra Prasad in his speech before the Constituent Assembly on 26 November, 1949 : "If the people are capable and men of character, they would be able to make the best even of a defective Constitution. India needs today nothing more than a set of honest men who will have the interest of the country before them".<sup>36</sup> It is evident that such men have not arrived on the Indian scene as yet. The defects that have stood in the way of Bengalees forming a character are pointed out by Tagore in 1895 while speaking on Vidyasagar thus : "We begin, but do not end. We make a fuss, but do not work. We do not believe what we perform ; we do not observe what we believe. We can construct numerous sentences, can't have an iota of self-sacrifice. We remain content with a display of our variety, don't exert ourselves to attain excellence. In all of our works we depend on others, yet we rend the air over their faults. Our pride consists in imitating others, our honour in their favour, our politics in throwing dust in their eyes and the chief aim of our life is to become referential to ourselves because of our dexterity in speech".<sup>37</sup> Besides, politics is not a game here, but a fight-to-finish battle. Differences of caste, class, language and religion are obstacles to national integration. A resolution of these subcultural differences is a must. Unfortunately this has not taken place—some commonly accepted 'rules of the game' are yet to arrive. Here politics needs being geared to human nature. As is well said by Burke : "Politics ought to be adjusted, not to human reasonings, but to human nature ; of which the reason is but a part, and by no means the greatest part".<sup>38</sup>

In this context, a modern, Bengali poet sees an apocalyptic vision of Calcutta's destruction. An expedition from Mauritius comes to rediscover Calcutta from the ruins. The excavation yields a *scroll* revealing the causes of destruction. It is 'fodecracy'. i.e. the rule by the fadias or power-brokers that destroyed

36. Rao, B. S. (ed)—The framing of India's Constitution (1968), vol. IV, 957-8.

37. Rabindra—Rachanavali, vol. IV, 501 : translations by the author.

38. Burke, E—On a pamphlet intitled, The State of "the nation" (1765).

democracy in Calcutta and ultimately the megalopolis itself.<sup>49</sup> This is a case of the failure of politics to become pragmatic or practical. And the result was the inexorable conclusion of history, Calcutta died her natural death. This might be her fate in the future, namely, she would become a second Mohenjo-Daro, the Mound of the Dead. In other words, a megalopolis would turn a necropolis! It is for the future to show whether today's speculation or prophecy would prove a fact or fiction.



## EPILOGUE

Calcutta starts as a *Dihi* and becomes a megalopolis. The word 'dihi' is derived from Persian, 'Dih' and Hindi 'Deeha', meaning village consisting of a few mouzas. The word element —'polis' means a city. This development of Calcutta has been an act of *urbanisation*. The process involves two phases, namely, (i) the movement of people from rural to an urban place where they engage in non-rural functions and (ii) the change in their life style from rural to urban with its associated values, attitudes and behaviours. The important variables in (i) are population density, and economic functions, whereas those in (ii) depend on social, psychological and behavioral factors. However, the two are complementary. A *metropolis* is the chief city, and in the USA the Bureau of the Census has used, since the 1950 census, the *Metropolitan Statistical Area* (MSA) to denote a city having at least 50,000 inhabitants in the urban core *plus* the contiguous countries having more than 75 per cent of their population engaged in non-agricultural activities. The MSA is the popular name of the more precise *SMSA* or the *Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area*. A larger unit is called the *SCSA* or the *Standard Consolidated Statistical Area*, made up of several *SMSAs*. The largest *SCSA* is composed of New York, New Jersey and Jersey city. It has its counter part in the *CMDA* or the Calcutta Metropolitan District Area.

The term 'city' is essentially a political designation, which refers to a place governed by some kind of administrative body. To denote size two terms are used—*supercity* to indicate a population of over 5 million, while *millionaire* that of at least one million. Calcutta is a supercity by this yardstick. Now cities begin to coalesce or merge together when they grow larger. To denote the special merging *conurbation* and *megalopolis* are used. The former was originally coined in reference to British urban growth and the latter to refer to the merging of cities along the urban corridor to the eastern US from Boston to Washington. A *superconurbation* is simply a giant conurbation or megalopolis with a population of at least 12 million. The Presidency Town of Calcutta developed western-style colonial-based district (CBD) with banks, insurance offices, cinema halls, hotels



and large-scale retail establishments at the city centre. From a late-seventeenth century settlement the city of Calcutta developed a fortress at the centre, a "European town" in the south, and a "native town" in the north. And the city grew spatially, with a CBD concentrated around the 1756 fort., demolished and rebuilt south of its original location. The Calcutta Metropolitan District (CMD), of which the city of Calcutta is a part, has an area of 500 sq. miles (1300 sq. km) and a population of 9.5 million. The CMD expands along both banks of the Hooghly River in a linear pattern for about 50 miles (80 km) and consists of about 500 local governing bodies, in which the city of Calcutta is the largest with 34 sq. miles (88 sq. km) and 5 million inhabitants. Away from Calcutta the local centres of CMD present the traditional baradar kind of land uses and are devoid of any imprint of a western-style CBD. Over 1,50,000 people commute to Calcutta daily from outside the Calcutta-Kolkata twin city complex. Stanley D. Brunn and Jack F. Williams have estimated and projected the population of the city of Calcutta in thousands as follows : in 1950—4,446 ; in 1980—9,583 ; in 2000—19,663.<sup>1</sup>

Patrick Geddes has rightly said of the development of cities : "Slum, semi-slum and superslum—to this has come the evolution of cities".<sup>2</sup> G. Moorhouse in his *Calcutta* (1983) has failed to understand the implications of this and has echoed what has been advocated by Friedrich Engels long ago. The latter to incite revolution was opposed to 'palliative' measures to provide better housing for the working classes. He held that the problems would be solved for the proletariat by a revolutionary seizure of the commodious quarters occupied by the bourgeoisie. "This notion", as pointed out by L. Mumford "(is) qualitatively inept and quantitatively ridiculous".<sup>3</sup> Engels and Moorhouse could not realise that the upper-class quarters were, more often than not, intolerable super-slums. And "the necessity for increasing the amount of housing, for expanding the space, for multiplying the equipment, for providing communal facilities was

far more *revolutionary* in its demands than any trifling expropriation of the quarters occupied by the rich would be". The latter notion is merely an important gesture of revenge, while the former a through-going reconstruction of the social environment. Even advanced countries like Sweden, England and the Netherlands have not yet grasped all the dimensions of this urban change. *Secondly*, metropolitan civilisation carries to its conclusion a contradiction born of the dual origin of the city. From the village, the city derives its nature as a mothering and life-promoting environment and the ways and values of an ungraded democracy. On the other hand, the city owes its existence to concentrated attempts at mastering other men and dominating the whole environment. Thus the city becomes a power-trapping utility. Our civilisation is a gigantic motor car moving along a one-way road at an ever-accelerating speed. However, the car lacks both the steering wheel and brakes. The consequences may be stated in the words of Henry Adams thus: "Law would disappear as theory or a *priori* principle and give place to force. Morality would become police. Explosives would reach cosmic violence. Disintegration would become integration".<sup>4</sup> And the human situation may be put in an image used by Henry James—it is that of the Happy Family and the Informal Machine: "The machine so rooted as to defy removal and the family still so indifferent, while it carries on the family business of buying and selling, of chattering and *dan* ig, to the danger of being blown up".<sup>5</sup> The machine referred to is the political machine of Calcutta, the classic embodiment of corruption and criminality. The existentialists, while mirroring our time, would equate 'reality' with the 'absurd'. And the expansion of the metropolis into the formless megalopolitan conurbation goes on. The fate of Rome has taken hold of Calcutta, since it has rotten internally. Calcutta may thus be characterised, in the words of Patrick Geddes, as 'parasitopolis' and 'pathopolis', the city of parasites and the city of diseases. Thus Calcutta has become a container of negative life—life turning against itself in perverse and destructive activities.

From the standpoint of both politics and urbanism Calcutta

4. Ibid, 635.

5. Ibid, 637.

presents a series of danger signals to warn one when life is moving in the wrong direction. These are crowds gathering in suffocating numbers, the steep rise of rents, the deteriorating housing conditions, the mass contests, the strip-tease made ubiquitous by advertisement, the frequent titillation of the senses by sex, drug and violence, all in the true Roman style. These are symptoms of the end : magnifications of demoralised power and minifications of life. In this context Mumford concludes : "When these signs multiply, Necropolis is near, though not a stone has yet crumbled. For the barbarian has already *captured the city from within*. Come, hangman ! Come, Vulture !"<sup>6</sup> Following Patrick Geddes's interpretation of the urban cycle of growth from village (eopolis) to megalopolis and necropolis, it may be stated that each historic civilisation begins with a living urban core, the polis and ends in a common graveyard of dust and bones, a Necropolis or city of the dead : fire-scorched ruins, shattered buildings, empty work-shops, heaps of meaningless refuse, the population massacred or driven into slavery. This is illustrated by India's Mohenjo-Daro having an area of 600 acres or less than a square mile. Any Calcuttan having Calcutta's welfare in his heart of hearts will hear a lamentation of the goddess of the city of Ur, having been wafted down the centuries :

"Verily all my birds and winged creatures have  
flown away—

'Alas ! for my city', I will say.

My daughters and my sons have been carried off—

'Alas for my men,' I will say.

O my city which exists no longer, my (city)  
attacked without cause,

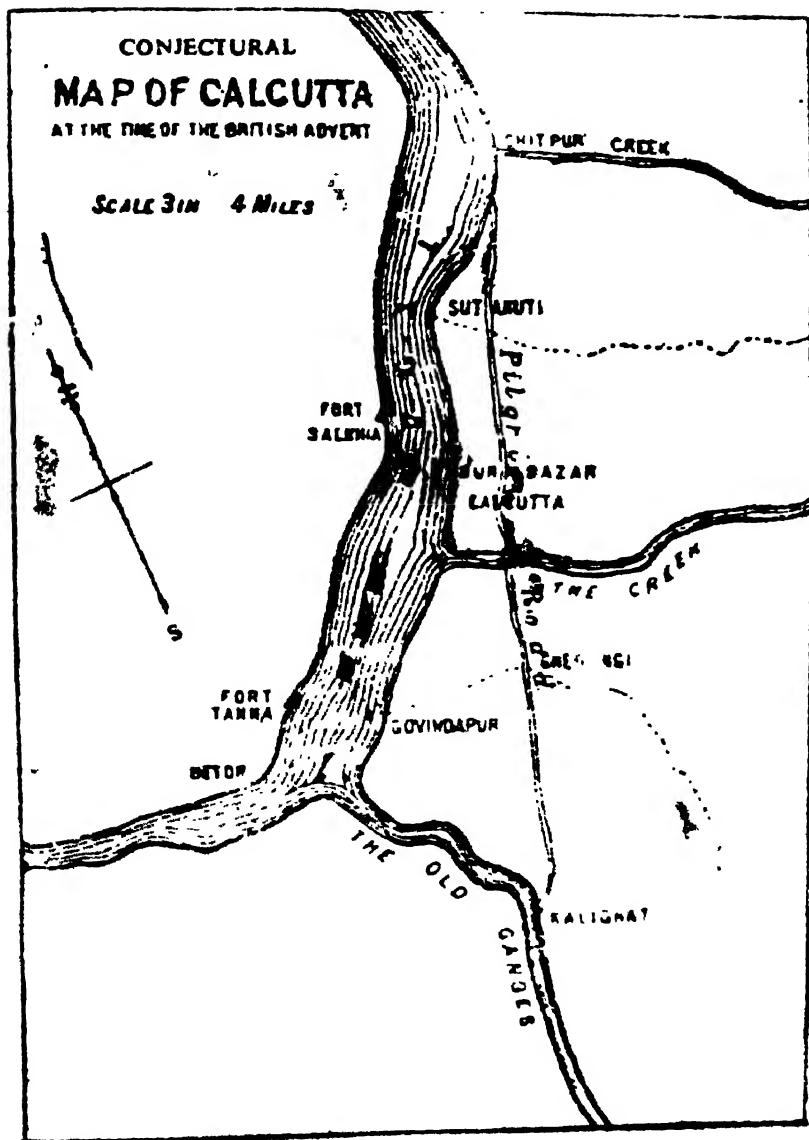
O my (city) attacked and destroyed".<sup>7</sup>

6. Ibid, 280-81.

7. Pritchard, J. E. (ed)—Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Princeton University, Press).

## APPENDIX A

*Conjectural map of Calcutta*



## APPENDIX B

### *Bainama*

"Copy of the deed of purchase<sup>1</sup> of the villages *Dihi Kalkotah*, etc., bearing the seal of the *qazi* and the signature of the *zamin-dars*. The details are as follows :

"We submissive to *Islam*, declaring our names and descent ; viz. Manohar Dat<sup>2</sup> son of Bas Deo, the son of Raghu, and Ramchand, the son of Bidhyadhar, son of Jagdis ; and Ram Bahadar, the son of Ram Deo, son of Kesu ; and Pran, the son of Kalsar, the son of Gauri ; and Manohar Singh, the son of Gandari, the son of [ ],<sup>3</sup> ; being in a state of legal capacity and in enjoyment of all the rights given by the law ; avow and declare upon this wise ; that we conjointly have sold and made a true and legal conveyance of the village *Dihi Kalkatah*, and *Sutaluti* within the jurisdiction of *paraganah Amirabad* and village *Gobindpur* under the jurisdiction of *parganahs Paeqan* and *Kalkatah*, to the English Company with rents and uncultivated lands and ponds and groves and rights over fishing and woodlands and dues from resident artisans, together with the lands appertaining thereto, bounded by the accustomed notorious and usual boundaries, the same being owned and possessed by us (up to this time the thing sold being in fact and in law free from adverse rights or litigation forming a prohibition to a valid sale and transfer) in exchange for the sum of one thousand and three hundred rupees, current coin of this time, including all rights and appurtenances thereof, internal and external ; and the said purchase money has been transferred to our possession from the possession of the said purchaser and we have made over the aforesaid purchased thing to him and have excluded from this agreement all false claims, and we have become absolute guarantors that if by chance any person entitled to the aforesaid boundaries should come forward, the defence thereof is incumbent upon us ; and henceforth neither we nor our representatives absolutely and entirely, in no manner whatsoever, shall lay claim to the aforesaid boundaries, nor shall the charge of any litigation fall upon the English Company. For these reasons we have caused to be written and have delivered

these few sentences that when need arises they may be evidence. Written on the 15th of the month *Jamadi I* in *Hijri* year 1110, equivalent to the 44th year of the reign full of glory and prosperity."

The date is the 10th November 1698 O.S.

#### REFERENCES

1. The *hainamah* is document No. 39 in additional M.S. No. 24039 in the British Museum, the translation of which was made by Mr. W. Irvine, c.s., retired.
2. *Dat* is most probably a mistake for *Dab* or *Dant*: Raghudeva's son is Basudeva, whose son is Manohardeva.
3. *Gandarb* (*Gandharba*) was also a son of Gaun: the blank stands probably for 'ditto'.

## APPENDIX C

### Governors/Presidents/Governors-General

#### I. *Governors and Presidents of Fort William*

Sir Charles Eyre	26 May 1700—7 January 1701
John Beard	7 January 1701—7 July 1705
Anthony Weltden	20th July 1710
John Russel	4th March 1711
Robert Hedges	3rd December 1714—28 December 1717
Samuel Feake	12th January 1718—17th <sup>f</sup> January 1723
John Deane	17th January 1723
Henry Frankland	30th January 1723—25 <sup>h</sup> August 1728
Edward Stephenson	17th September 1728 (Governor of Fort William for a single day)
John Deane	18th September 1728—25 February 1732
John Stackhouse	25 February 1732—29 Jan. 1739
Thomas Braddyll	29 January 1739—4 February 1746
John Forster	4th February 1746 to 20th March 1748
William Barwell	18th April to 17th July 1749
Adam Dawson	17 July 1749—5 July 1752
William Fytche	5 July to 8 August 1752
Roger Drake (Junior)	8 August 1752—22 June 1758
William Watts	22nd June 1758 to 26th June 1758
Robert Clive	27 June 1758—23 Jan. 1760
John Zephaniah Holwell	23 January to July 27, 1760
Henry Vansittart	27 July 1760—3 December 1764
John Spencer	3 December 1764—3 May 1765

Robert Clive	3 May 1765—29 January 1767
Henry Verelst	29 January 1767—December 1769
John Cartier	26 December 1769—April 13, 1772

## II. *Governors-General of Fort William in Bengal*

(Regulating Act of 1773)

Warren Hastings	13 April 1772—October 20, 1774—Governor 20 October 1774—February 1, 1785—Governor-General
Macpherson, Sir John	February 1785—Sept. 1786
Cornwallis, Charles	Sept. 1786—1793 (officiating)
Sir J. Shore	1793
Lt. General Sir Alured Clarke	1798 (March)—officiating
Wellesley, Richard Colley (Marquis, Lord Mornington)	May 18, 1798—July 30, 1805
Cornwallis, Charles, First Marquis	1805 (July 30)
Sir George Barlow	1805 (October)—officiating
Minto, Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of	July 1807—October 1813
Lord Moira (Hastings, Francis Rawdon, First Marquis of)	Oct. 4, 1813—Jan. 9, 1823
Adam, John	Jan.—August, 1823—officiating
Amherst, William Pitt, Earl Amherst of Arrakan	1823—1828 (from August 1)
William Butterworth Baley	Officiated as Governor-General from March to July, 1828
Lord William Cavendish- Bentinck	July 4, 1828—1833

## III. *Governors-General of India* (Charter Act of 1833)

Lord William Cavendish- Bentinck	1833-35
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Sir Charles (Lord) Metcalfe	1835 March to March 1836 (officiating)
Lord Auckland (Baron, Earl of)	March 1836
Lord Ellenborough (Baron, Earley)	February, 1842
William Wilberforce Bird	June, 1844 (officiating)
Sir Henry (Viscount) Hardinge	July, 1844
Earl (Marquess) of Dalhousie	January, 1848
Viscount (Earl) Canning	February, 1856

#### IV. *Governors-General and Viceroy*s

Viscount (Earl) Canning	November 1, 1858
Earl of Elgin and Kincardine I	March, 1862
Sir Robert Napier (Baron Napier of Magdala)	1863 (officiating)
Sir William T. Denison	1863 (officiating)
Sir John (Lord) Lawrence	January, 1864
Earl of Mayo	January, 1869
Sir John Strachey	1872 (officiating)
Lord Napier of Merchistoun	1872 (officiating)
Baron (Earl of) Northbrook	May, 1872
Baron (Earl of) Lytton	April, 1876
Marquess of Ripon	June, 1880
Earl of Dufferin (Marquess of Dufferin and Ava)	December, 1884
Marquess of Lansdowne	December, 1888
Earl of Elgin and Kincardine II	January, 1894
Baron (Earl) Curzon of Kedleston	January 6, 1899
Lord Ampthill	April, 1904 (officiating)
Baron (Marquess) Curzon of Kedleston (re-appointed)	December, 1904
Earl of Minto II	November, 1905
Baron Hardinge of Penshurst	November, 1910

V. *Governors-General and Viceroy* (since the Delhi Durbar, December 12, 1911)

Lord Hardinge	November, 1910—April 1916
Lord Chelmsford	April 1916—April 1921
Lord Reading	April 1921—April 1926
Lord Lytton II	1925 (officiating)
Lord Irwin	April 1926—April 1931
Lord Goscen	1929 (officiating)
Lord Willingdon	April 1931—April, 1936
Sir George Stanley	1934 (officiating)
Lord Linlithgow	April 1936—October, 1943
Lord Wavell	October, 1943—March, 1947
Lord Louis Mountbatten	March—14 August, 1947 ; Governor-General from August 15, 1947 to November, 1947
(Sir John Colville—officiated	in December, 1946 and May, 1947 when Lord Wavell and Lord Mountbatten went to England for consultation with the British Government)
Chakravarti, Rajagopalachari	Governor-General from November 1947 to January 25, 1950

VI. *Lt. Governors of Bengal upto March 31, 1912*

Sir Frederick James Halliday	1854
Sir John Peter Grant	1859
Sir Cecil Beadon	1862
Sir William Grey	1867
Sir George Campbell	1871
Sir Richard Temple	1874
Sir Ashley Eden	1877
Sir Steuart C. Bayley	1879 (officiating)
Sir Augustus Rivers Thompson	1882
H. A. Cockerell	1885 (officiating)

Sir Steuart C. Bayley	1887
Sir Charles Alfred Elliott	1890
Sir A. P. MacDonnell	1893 (officiating)
Sir Alexander Mackenzie	1895 (Retired on April 6, 1898)
Charles Cecil Stevens	1897 (officiating)
Sir John Woodburn	1898 (Died on November 21, 1902)
J. A. Bourdillon	1902 (officiating)
Sir A. H. Leith Fraser	1903
Lancelot Hare	1906 (officiating)
F. A. Slacke	1906 (Ditto)
Sir E. N. Baker	1908 (Retired on September 2, 1911)
F. W. Duke	1911 (officiating)

N.B. : The office was abolished with effect from April 1, 1912.

#### VII. *Governors of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal*

Lord Carmichael (Baron of Skirling)	1912
Lord Ronaldshay (Earl)	1917
Sir Henry Wheeler	March, 1922 (officiating)
Lord Bulwer-Lytton	1922
Sir John Kerr	April 10 to August 7, 1925 (officiating)
Lord Bulwer-Lytton	August 8, 1925
Sir Hugh Stevenson	June 11 to October 10, 1926 (officiating)
Lord Lytton	October 11, 1926
Sir Francis Stanley Jackson	1927
Sir Hugh Stevenson	June 5 to October, 1930
Sir Francis Stanley Jackson	1930
Sir John Anderson	1932
Lord Bratourne	1937
Sir John Woodhead	August, 1939 (officiating)
Sri John Herbert	1939
Sir R. G. Casey	1944
Sir F. J. Burrows	1946

VIII. *Governors since August 15, 1947*

Chakravarti, Rajagopalachari	(1947-48)
Sir B. L. Mitra	1947 (November/December, 1947)—officiating
Dr. Kailash Nath Katzu	1948-51
Dr. Harendra Coomar Mukhopadhyaya	1951-56
Padmaja Naidu	1956-67
Justice P. B. Chakraborti	1957 (August)—officiating
Justice Surajit Lahiri	1961 (July-August)—officiating
Dharambir	1967-69
Justice D. N. Sinha	1969 (officiating)
Shri Sri Swarup Dhawan	1969-71
Justice S. P. Mitra	(officiating)
A. L. Dias	1971-77
Tribhuban Narayan Singh	(1977-81)
B. D. Pandey	1981-83
A. P. Sharma	1983-84
Uma Shankar Dikshit	1984-85
Sayad Nurul Hussain	1985-89 (upto February)
I. V. Rajesvar	February, 1989
Sayad Nurul Hussain	February 8, 1990—

## APPENDIX D

### EMPEROR FARRUKHSIAR'S *FARMAN* of December 30, 1716 to the ENGLISH COMPANY

To all Governors and their Assistants, Jaggeerdars (*jagirdars*), Phowdsars (*foujdars*), *Corrorys* (*krori*), Guards on ye roads & rivers and Jemidars (*zamindars*), off ye Subaships off Bengal, Behar and Orixia, that Are att present and shall be hereafter. The Port of Hughly &ca ports off these Subaships. Lett them live always in hopes off the Kings Favour, and by these presents know That att this time off conquest and being conquerour Mr. John Surman and Gojah Seerhaud (Khawajah Sarhad) Factors to ye English Company have humbly petitioned to the throne off Justice that according to ye Nishaun (*nishan*) off him/who is pardoned and has power in heaven, pleased with ye Love off God The Saintlike King who is in heaven. The will off God is great so is ye word, (Azzimuth Shaun) (Azimu sh shan), & Sunnods (*sanaads*) formerly received; Custom is pardoned the English Company, the port off Suratt Excepted. In ye port off Hughly a peeshcash (*peshkash*) off 3000 Rs. is paid into ye Kings treasury in lieu off Customes. They petition that according to former Sunnods (*sanaads*) they may be favoured with ye Kings Phirmaund (*farman*). The universal Commander gives this particular order which ye world obeys "That all goods and necessary which their Factors of the Subaships, ports and round About, bring or carry away Either by land or water. Know they are Custom free. That they buy and Sell att their pleasure. Take the Accustomary 3000 Rupees and demand no more on Any Account and If att any time or place their Goods should be stole. Endeavour to find them out, punishing the theif and returning them to their due owner, and In their Settling Factorys att any place, their Goods and Necessarys, buying and Selling. Lett them be assisted according to Justice That iff any Merchants Weavers or others become Debtors, they pay their Factors their due according to a Just Account, nott suffering any one to hurt or Injure said Factors, and for the Customers on Wood (Cutborrah) &ca that no one molest their boates or those hired by them. They Still petition the Clean (clear?) high and lofty throne That in ye Subaships

and Duannys (*diwanis*) The Original Sunnods (*sanads*) are demanded, and that others be given thereby Itt is nott Feasable to produce ye Originalls in Every place. We desire that a copy under ye Cozzys (quazi's) Seal be allowed off ; ye originals not being demanded ; nor we forced to receive others thereby from ye Subah, In Calcutta, there is a settled Factory off the Companys. The renting off Calcutta, Sootalooty, and Govindpore In ye Pergunnas Ammerabad &ca in ye Subaship off Bengal, bought from ye Jemidars (*zamindars*), was formerly granted them 1195-6 the Yearly rent being paid into the Kings treasury. They desire that 38 towns, rent 8121-8 near those Abovementioned may be granted them and that the yearly rent be duly paid into ye treasury. The most Just order is given That the copy under ye Chief Cozzys (qazis) Seal be Sufficient. That the towns already bought doe remain in their possession according to former Custom, and that the renting off ye Adjacent towns is granted, they being bought from ye Owners, and then permission given by the Subah and Duan (*diwan*). They Farther petition that from ye reign off Allumgeer (Alamgir) The Treasuries off other Subaships take discompt upon Siccas made att Madrass. The Silver off those Rupees is now the same with that off Suratt, by which they Sustain loss. They desire ye Kings Order may be given that in case ye Coin is off the same fineness with that off Suratt and other places, they be nott troubled for any discompt. Iff any off ye Company's Servants become Debtors, and F' leavoure to run away, to See them delivered to ye Chief off ye Factory, and By reason off Customes off Phowsdarry (*faujdari*) &ca that is forbid. The Companys Comastoes (*gumashtahs*) and Servants are very much troubled, please to pardon itt. The Imperiall order is strictly given. That from the 5th Year off this Glorious reign off the Silver coined att Madrass be as good as that coined att the Port of Suratt doe nott demand any discompt, and whomsoever off ye Companys Servants being Debtors want to run Away that they be Seized and delivered to ye Chief off the Factory. For that which is forbid (*abob Memnoow*, (*abwah-i-mamn*, 35) Phowsdarry (*faujdari*) &ca doe nott molest them for itt. They likewise petition That ye Company having Settled Factory in Bengall Behar and Orixia doe design to Settle others and accordingly desire that in any place where a Factory shall be appointed 40 beagues (*bigahs*) off Ground be Granted from the King for that use.

That att Sometimes Ships are Obliged by Storms and winds to run Ashore and are wreckt. The Governours off ports injuriously Seize upon ye Goods and att some places demand ye fourth part. In the Island Off Bombay belonging to ye English European Coin in Currant, That according to ye Custom of Madrass they may coin Siccas. The Order which all ought and doe obey is given. That according to ye Custom off other Factorys in other Subaships Execute itt. That these people have dealings at all ports and att this Court having very favourable Phirmaunds (*farmans*) Granted in which Custom is excused. Take particular Care off all wrecks and goods so lost by Storm belonging to them, and In ye Island off Bombay iff the Siccas be coined According to ye Siccas off Idostan Lett them pass Currant." (Wilson, *Early Annals*, Vol. 1, Part II, Surman Embassay, pp. 211-213, reprint, 1963).

## APPENDIX E

### LIST OF VILLAGES FOR WHICH EMPEROR FAR- RUKHSIAR GRANTED THE ENGLISH COMPANY PERMISSION TO ACQUIRE ZEMINDARY/ TALUKDARI

Name of the town/village	Parganas in which they were situated	Rent	Total Rent
<b>On the Opposite Shore</b>			
1. SALICIA (Salkia)	Borou Paican	61 11.0 216.—.3	277.11.3
2. HAURAH (Howrah)	Borou Paican	237. 5.4 145 13.5	383. 2.9
3. CASSUNDEAT (Kasundivah)	Borou Paican	129.14.4 8. 7.0	138. 5.4
4. RAMKISSENNAPORF (Ramkishnapore)	Borou Paican	89. 3.3 80.11.0	169.14.8
5. BATTER (Betor)	Borou Paican	351.13.0 229. 1.9	580.14.9
<b>On the Calcutta Side</b>			
6. DACKNYPAUK PARRA (Dakshini Paikpara)	Ameeravad		145. 2.0
7. BELGASSIAH (Belgatchia)	Calcutta Paican	304. 6.9 13 10.0	318. 0.9
8. DACKNYDAND (Dakshinidandi)	Calcutta Paican Ameeravad	37. 8.9 12. 0.3 376. 0.0	425. 9.0
9. HOGULCUNDY (Hogulkuria)	Paican		137.11.3

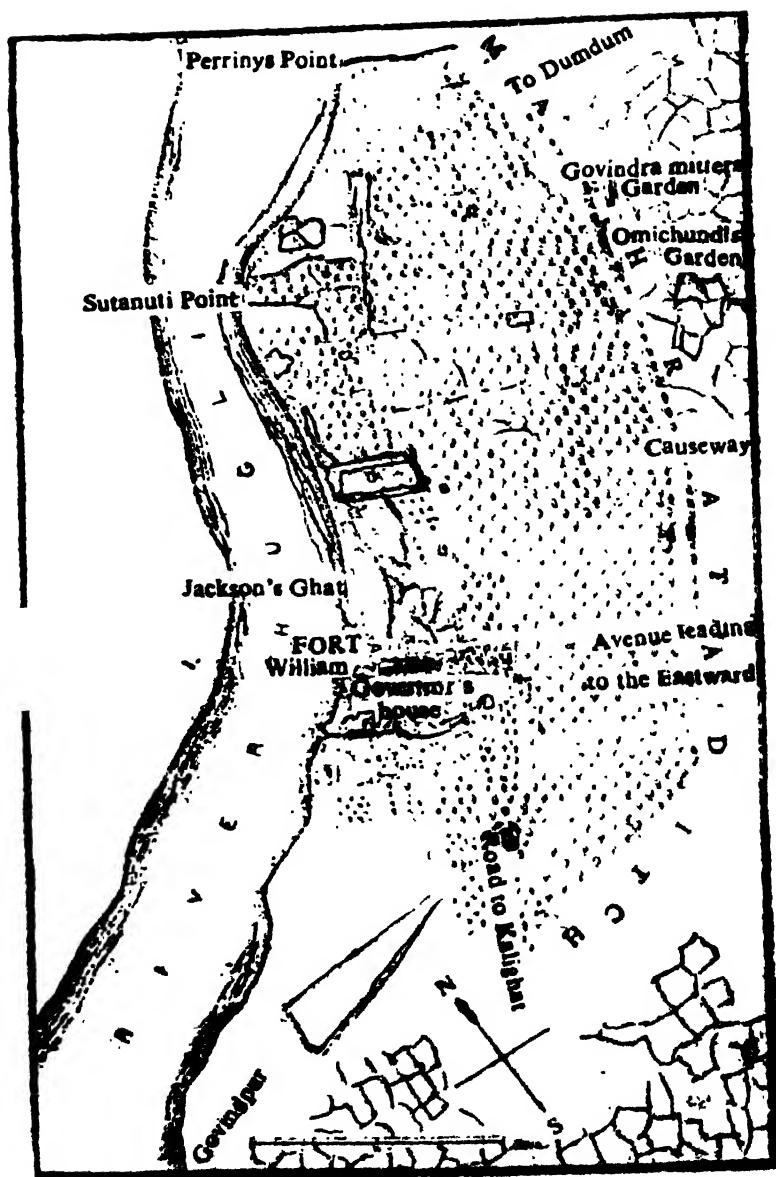


Name of the town/village	Parganas in which they were situated.	Rent	Total Rent
10. ULTADANG (Ultadanga)	Culcutta Paican	194. 1.6 120.12.9	314.14.3
11. SIMLIAH (Simla)	Manpore		81.15.5
12. MACOND (Makonda)	Manpore		118.12.8
13. COMERPARRA (Kumarpara)	Culcutta		63.10.0
14. CANCERGASSIAH (Kankurgachi)	Paican Nodiah	37. 7.0 170.15.8	208. 6.8
15. BAGMAREY (Bagmari)	Culcutta		49. 7.8
16. ARCOOLEY (Arpuli)	Manpore		22.11.9
17. MIRZAPORE	Culcutta Paican	57.15.9 115.13.9	173.13.6
18. SCALDO (Sealdah)	Culcutta		118. 9.10
19. COOLIAH (Kulia Tangra)	Culcutta Paican	127. 6.8 445. 3.9	572.10.5
20. TANGARAH (Tangra)	Culcutta Paican	62.11.6 166. 1.9	228.13.3
21. SUNDAH (Sura)	Culcutta Paican	62. 0.4 586. 8.11	648. 9.3
22. BAD-SUNDAH (Sura East)	Culcutta		40. 8.0
23. SHEHPARRA	Culcutta		41. 6.6
24. DOLAND	Culcutta Paican	111. 6.8 195. 1.0	306. 7.8
25. BERGEY (Birji)	Culcutta Paican Nodiah Amceravad	22. 6.2 213.10.1 1.14.0 45.15.2	283.13.5

Name of the town/village	Parganas in which they were situated	Rent	Total Rent
26. SILTALA (Taltala)	Culcutta	31.11.0	206.14.5
	Paican	175. 5.3	
27. TOPSIAH (Topsia)	Culcutta	78. 8.0	79. 8.9
	Paican	21. 0.9	21. 3.0
28. SANGASSEY	Culcutta		0.14.0
29. CHOBOGAH	Culcutta		
30. CHERANGEY (Chowringhi)	Culcutta	14.13.5	
	Paican	74.14.0	89.11.5
31. COLIMBA (Kalinga)	Culcutta	270. 3.3	
	Paican	113. 4.10	383. 8.1
32. GOBERAH (Gobra Rd)	Paican		100. 1.6
33. BADDOCKNEYDAND (Bad Dakshini Dandi)	Paican		125. 8.4
34. SILLAMPORE (Dihi Serampore)	Culcutta	11. 7.3	
	Paican	95 3.7	
	Ameeravad	20. 8.0	127. 2.10
35. JOLA COLIMBA (Kalinga)	Culcutta		114. 3.8
36. GEREDALPARRA	Culcutta	31. 9.2	
	Paican	70. 4.4	101.13.6
37. HINTALEE (Entally)	Culcutta	61. 9.10	
	Paican	167. 8.8	229. 2.6
38. CHITPORE	Ameeravad		252. 8.0

(Wilson, *Early Annals*, Vol. II, Part II, Surman Embassy, pp. 362-67)

# APPENDIX F



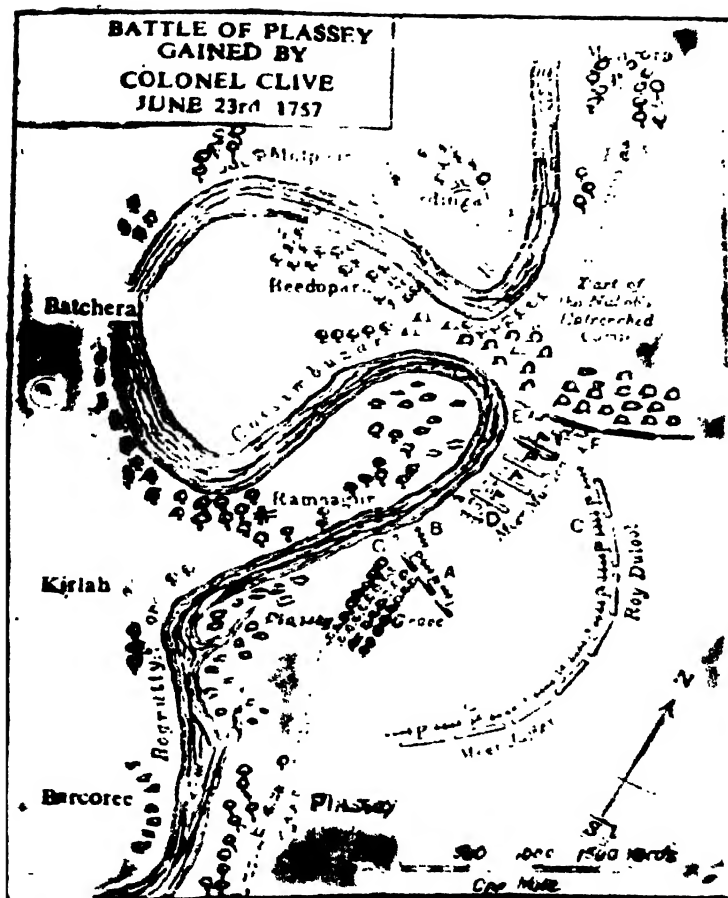
Calcutta in 1742

(From a MS. Drawing by Foresti and Olifiers in the British Museum)





## APPENDIX H



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>A. Position of the British Army at 9 in the Morning</p> <p>B. Four guns advanced to check the fire of the French Party at the tank D</p> <p>C. The Nabob's Army.</p> <p>D. A tank from whence the French Party cannonaded till 3 in the Afternoon, when part of the British Army took Post there, and</p> | <p>the Enemy retired within their Entrenched Camp.</p> <p>E. A Redoubt and mound &amp; taken by Assault at past 4, and which completed the Victory</p> <p>F. The Nabob's Hunting House. The dotted line BE shows the encroachment of the River since the Battle.</p> |
|--|--|

[From V. A. Smith: "The Oxford History of India" (Clarendon Press)]  
 Battlefield of Plassey, showing disposition of contending forces drawn to scale from a sketch ascribed to Clive.

## APPENDIX I

### GRANT OF DEWANI TO THE EAST INDIA COMPANY BY EMPEROR SHAH ALAM,<sup>1</sup> 1765

(August 12, 1765)

At this happy time our royal Firmaund, indispensably requiring obedience, is issued : that whereas, in consideration of the attachment and services of the high and mighty, the noblest of exalted nobles, the chief of illustrious warriours, our faithful servants and sincere well-wishers, worthy of our royal favours, the English Company, we have granted them the Dewanny<sup>2</sup> of the Provinces of Bengal, Behar, and Orissa, from the beginning of the Fussul Rubby of the Bengal year 1172, as a free gift and ultumgau,<sup>3</sup> without the association of any other person, and with an exemption from the payment of the customs of the Dewanny, which used to be paid to the Court. It is requisite that the said Company engage to be security for the sum of twenty-six lakhs of rupees a year, for our royal revenue, which sum has been appointed from the Nabob Nudjum-ul-Dowla Behauder, and regularly remit the same to the royal Circar ; and in this case, as the said Company are obliged to keep up a large army for the protection of the Provinces of Bengal, etc., we have granted to them whatsoever, may remain out of the revenues of the said Provinces, after remitting the sum of twenty-six lakhs of rupees to the royal Circar, and providing for the expenses of the Nizamut. It is requisite that our royal descendants, the viziers, the bestowers of dignity, the Omrahs, high in rank, the great officers, the Muttaseddees of the Dewanny, the managers of the business of the Sultanut, the Jaghirdars and Croories, as well as the future as the present, using their constant endeavours for the establishment of this our royal command, leave the said office in possession of the said Company, from generation to generation, for ever and ever. Looking upon them to be assured from dismission or removal, they must, on no account whatsoever, give them any interruption, and they must regard them as excused and exempted from the payment of all the customs of the Dewanny and royal demands. Knowing our orders on the subject to be most strict and positive, let them not deviate therefrom.

## REFERENCES

1. In a letter to William Pitt the Elder, dated January 7, 1759, clive suggested the desirability of acquiring the sovereignty of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa for the E.I. Company and added : "There is little room to doubt our easily obtaining the Moghul's sunnud (or grant) in confirmation thereof, provided we agreed to pay him the stipulated allotment out of the revenues viz, fifty lacs annually."
2. *Dewanny* is properly *diwani* ; popularly *dewani*. It means the office of the *diwan* under the Mahomedan Governments, the *diwan* was  
\* "the head financial minister of a province charged with the collection of the revenue, the remittance of it to the imperial treasury, and invested with extensive judicial powers in all civil and financial causes". (*Hobson-Jobson*, 309. 311).
3. *Altangha* or *Grant-under-seal*. Such grant constituted 'the next approach to land-ownership.' It was permanent



## APPENDIX J

*A translation of the sunnud for the free tenure of  
the town of Calcutta, & c., to the Hon'ble East  
India Company given under the seal of the  
Nawab Dowla Allawa Mir Mahomud  
Saddoc, Khan Bahadoor Assud  
Jung, Diwan of the Subah  
of Bengal*

To the Mutsuddies for affairs for the time being and to come, and zamindars, and chowdries and talukdars, and kanungoes of the mauza of Govindpur, & c., in the districts of the Pargana of Calcutta, belonging to the Paradise of Nations, the Subah of Bangala, be it known that in consequence of the Ferd Sawal signed by the Glory of the Nobility and Administration Sujah-ul-Mulk Hossein-o-Dowla Mir Mahomed Jafir, Khan Bahadoor, Mohabut Jung, Nazim of Subah, and the Ferd Huckeekut and Muchilca signed conformably thereto, the forms of which are herein fully set forth, the rents of the aforesaid mauzas, & c. which adjoin to the factory of the noblest of merchants, the English Company, amounting to eight thousand eight hundred and thirty-six rupees and something more from the first of Rubbee Usanee 5 Tun according to the endorsement, are forgiven to the end that they provide for the defence of their factory and the safeguard of the seaports herewith. It is there (the Mutsuddies, & c.,) duty to desist from all claims for the rents, nor in any way, nor by any means oppress or disturb them. In this particular be they puctual.

Dated as above.

Let the endorsement be wrote.<sup>1</sup>

Particulars of the endorsement.

In consequence of the Ferd Sawal signed by the Glory of the Nobility and Administration Sujah-ul-Mulk Hossein-o-Dowla Mir Mahomed Jafir, Khan Bahadoor, Mohabut Jung, Nazim of Subah, and the Ferd Huckeekut Muchilca signed conformably thereto, the forms of which are herein fully set forth, the rents of the mauza of Govindpur, & c., in the districts of the pargana of Cal-

cutta, & c., belonging to the Paradise of Nations, the Subah of Bangala, and dependent on Khalsa Shereefa and the Jagheer of the Sircar which adjoin to the factory of the noblest of merchants, the English Company, amounting to eight thousand eight hundred and thirty-six rupees and something more from the latter, season of Oodaul in the year (1164) eleven hundred and sixty-four of the Bengal era are forgiven the noblest of merchants aforesaid.

Mauzas and mahals, 22½ (two markets)

• Mauzas, mahals 20½. 2 Markets

Amount according to the Ferd signed by the Kanungoes of the Subah.

Form of the sign manual.

Be the Sunnud granted. Form of the Ferd Sawal. The noblest of merchants, the English Company, represent that the factory for carrying on their trade in the pargana of Calcutta lying near the sea and being liable to continual alarms and irruptions from the enemy, for their defence they have made a trench of water round their factory and left an esplanade on all sides at the distance of a cannon shot, and that Mauza of Govindapur, & c., in the district of pargana of Calcutta, & c., of the Sircar Sautgaum, belonging to the Paradise of Nations the Subah of Bangala, dependent on the Khalsa Shereefa and Jagheer of the Sircar adjoining thereto, they request that a sunnud exempting them from the payment of the rents thereof be granted them. In this particular what are your commands.

Mauzas and mahals, 22½

Mauzas, 20½

Mahals (2 markets). 2

#### REFERENCES

1. In the original Fesset Khrug.

## APPENDIX K

*A translation of the Sunnud for the zamindari of the  
Hon'ble East India Company's lands, given under  
the seal of the Nawab Allao Dowlah Mir  
Mahomed Saddoc Khan Bahadoor  
Assud Jung, Diwan of the Subah  
of Bengal.*

To the Mutsuddies for affairs for the time being and to come, and chowdries and kanungoes and inhabitants and husbandmen of the kismut parganas of Calcutta, & c., of the Sircar Sautgaum, & c., belonging to the Paradise of Nations. The Subah of Bangala, be it in known that in consequence of the Ferd Sawal signed by the Glory of the Nobility and Administration, Sujah-ul-Mulk Hossein-o-Dowla Mir Mahamed Jafir, Khan Bahadoor, Mahabut Jung, Nazim of the Subah, and the Ferd Huckeekut and Muchilca signed conformably thereto, the terms of which are therein fully set forth, the office of the zamindari of the parganas above written in consideration of the sum of Rs. 20,101 (twenty thousand one hundred and one rupees) prescush, &c., to the Imperial Sircar according to the endorsement, from the months Pous (au 1164) in the year eleven hundred and sixty-four of the Bengal era, is conferred upon the noblest of merchants—the English Company—to the end that they attend to the rites and customs thereof as is fitting, nor in the least circumstance neglect or withhold the vigilance and care due thereto; that they deliver into the Treasury in the proper times the due rents of the Sircar; that they behave in such a manner to the inhabitants and lower sort of people that by their good management the said parganas may flourish and increase; that they suffer no robbers, nor house-breakers to remain within their districts, and take such a care of the King's highways that the travellers and passengers may pass and repass without fear and molestation; that (which God forbid) if the effects of any person be plundered or stolen, they discover and produce the plunderers and thieves, together with the goods, and deliver the goods to the owners, and the criminals to condign punishment, or else that they themselves be responsible for the said goods; that they take special care that no one be

guilty of any crime or drunkenness within the limits of their zamindari ; that after the expiration of the year they take a discharge according to custom, and that they deliver the accounts of their zamindari, agreeable to the stated forms, every year into the duftecana of their sircar, and that they refrain from demanding the articles forbidden by the Imperial Court (the asylum of the world)<sup>1</sup>

It is their (the Mutsuddies, &c.,) duty to look upon the said Company as the established and lawful zamindar of these places. and whatsoever appertains or is annexed to that office is their right. In this particular be they strictly punctual. Dated the first of Rubbee Ossanee in the third sun of the reign.

#### REFERENCES

1. The Company further pledged themselves not to allow of any robbery, house-breaking or drunkenness within their bounds

## APPENDIX L : Town and Suburbs

The town then, within the Mahratta Ditch, and the suburbs outside of it, were, as far as we can trace, composed from 1757 to 1857 of the following mauzas respectively :

### TOWN

1. The Settlement (within Dhce Calcutta).
2. Bazar Calcutta.
3. Dihi Calcutta.
4. Sutanuti, including Burtollah.
5. Govindapur (with its Bazar).
6. Chaurangi.
7. Simleah (a part).
8. Molunga (including Gonespur).
9. Hogulkuria.
10. Ooltadinga (a part).
11. Tuntuneah
12. Arcooly
13. Mirzapur.
14. Dingabhanga (Jala Colinga).
15. Colinga.
16. Talpooker (included in Colinga).
17. Dihi Birjee (a part).
18. Makunda.
19. Kishpoorpara.
20. Amhati.

### SUBURBS.

#### *Panchannagram.*

- |    |      |          |   |             |
|----|------|----------|---|-------------|
| I  | Dihi | Sinthee  | { | 1. Sinthee. |
|    |      |          | { | 2. Cossipur |
|    |      |          | { | 3. Paikpara |
|    |      |          | { | 4. Chitpur. |
| II | „    | Chitpore | { | 5. Tallah.  |
|    |      |          | { | 6. Beerpara |
|    |      |          | { | 7. Kalidaha |

III	„	Bagzolla	{	8. Dakhindharee.
				9. Kankooria.
				10. Noabad.
IV	„	Dakshin Paikpara	{	11. Belgatchya.
				12. Ooltadanga (part).
V	„	Ooltadanga	{	13. Bagmari.
				14. Gouriberh.
VI	„	Simleah	{	15. Bahir Simleah.
				16. Narikeldanga.
				17. Soorah.
VII	„	Soorah	{	18. Kankoorgatche.
				19. Koochnan.
				20. Duttabad.
VIII	„	Coolcah	{	21. Mullickbad.
				22. Coolcah.
				23. Sealdah.
IX	„	Sealdah	{	24. Ballaghata
				25. Entally.
				26. Pagladanga.
X	„	Entally	{	27. Neemuckpoeta
				28. Kamardanga.
				29. Gobrah
				30. Lengrai
				31. Topsea.
				32. Tijula.
XI	„	Topsiah	{	33. Baniapooker including Kureya.
				34. Chowbagah.
				35. Dhullanda.
				36. Saupgatohee.
				37. Auntobad.
				38. Nonadanga.
XII	„	Serampore	{	39. Bondel Ooloberia.
				40. Buldeadanga.
				41. Koostea.
				42. Purranagger.
				43. Ghoogoodanga.
				44. Serampore.

XIII	Chuckerberh	45. Ballygunj.
		46. Gudshaha.
		47. Chuckerberh.
XIV	Bhowanipur	48. Bhowanipur.
		49. Neejgram.
		50. Beltola.
XV	Manoharpur	51. Kalighat.
		52. Manoharpur.
		53. Moodeali.
		54. Shahanagar.
		55. Koykalee.

Generally speaking, this division of town and suburbs which were treated as two separate municipal towns in 1857, remained, with certain modifications, extant till 1885.

The constituent villages of some of these *dihis*, when large, were subdivided afterwards into smaller mauzas and there were, therefore, 59 villages for 14 *dihis* in 1765 and 65 mauzas at a later date. As examples of this sub-division we may note that mauza Sinthee was split up into Sinthee, Neej-Sinthee and Goop-tabindaban, Cossipur into Cossipur, Utterpara, Nyenan and Nij-Nyenan, and Dakshindaree into Dakhindaree and Neej Dhakhindaree.

The annual revenue of each *dih*i was as follows .

I—Rs. 1,958-13-5 ; II—Rs. 9,191-9 ; III—Rs. 2,046-3 ; IV—Rs. 307-13-3 ; V—Rs. 2,424-13 ; VI—nil ; VII—Rs. 1,896-1-9 ; VIII—Rs. 2,110-13-9 ; IX—Rs. 2,263-4-6 ; X—Rs. 2,302-9 ; XI—Rs. 2,815-10 ; XII—Rs. 1,430-15-5 ; XIII—Rs. 1,669-6-6 ; XIV—nil ; XV—Rs. 1,529-12-10.

## APPENDIX M

### PROCLAMATION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF CALCUTTA IN 1794

Whereas in and by the 159th Section (Cap. 52) of an Act passed in the 33rd year of His Majesty's reign, intituled "An Act for continuing in the East India Company, for a further term, the possession of the British Territories in India, together with their exclusive trade, under certain limitations for establishing further Regulations for the government of the said territories, and the better administration of Justice within the same ; for appropriating to certain uses the revenues and profits of the said Company ; and for making provision for the good order and government of the towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay", it is enacted that "If any question shall arise touching or concerning the true limits and extent of the said towns and factories, or any of them, the same shall be enquired into by the Governor General in Council at Fort William, in respect to the limits and extent of Calcutta, and by the Governor in Council of Fort St. George in respect to the limits and extent of Madras : and the Governor in Council at Bombay, in respect to the town of Bombay, and that such limits as the said respective Governments by order in Council, shall declare and prescribe to be the limits of the said towns and factories respectively, shall be held ~~dec~~ ed, and taken in law as the true limits of the same, any custom or usage to the contrary notwithstanding". And whereas such question, as in and by the said Clause of the said Act is meant and referred to, has arisen and been made, with respect to the limits of the said town of Calcutta and the Governor General in Council, in pursuance of the authority vested in him by the said Act, has enquired into the same, and by an order duly made in Council, has declared and prescribed the limits of the said town, and has directed and commanded the same to be publicly notified, in order that the said limits, so declared and prescribed, may be known to the inhabitants of the said town, and to all persons whom the same may in any wise concern, it is hereby publicly notified that the town of Calcutta, in respect of all legal intents and purposes, extends to, and is bounded by, the several lines limits, and boundaries hereinafter mentioned and described, that is to say,—



"The **NORTHERN BOUNDARY** is declared to commence and does accordingly commence, on the west side of the River Hoogly at the Post or Mete No. 22, situated at the north point of Colonel Robertson's garden, called Jackapore, immediately opposite to the mouth of the brook called Chitpore Nullah, or Baug Bazar Nullah, and the said northern boundary is from thence declared to continue, and is continued accordingly, by a line drawn across the river from the aforesaid point to the south corner of the mouth of the said nullah, unto the Post or Mete No. 1. near the foot of the Chitpore Bridge, and from thence by a line drawn easternly, and passing the south end of the said bridge to Post or Mete No. 2, and from thence along the south side of the said nullah or brook, to the Post or Mete No. 3, and thence on to Post or Mete No. 4, passing the Old Powder Mill Bazar, until it reaches the foot of the bridge leading to Dum-Dum, where the Post or Mete No. 5 is.

"The **EASTERN BOUNDARY** is declared to commence, and does accordingly commence, at the said Post or Mete No. 5, and is declared to continue, and does accordingly continue, by a line traced along the west or inner side of the Mahratta ditch or entrenchment and the east side of the road adjoining thereunto, until it reaches the Post or Mete No. 6, at the northern angle next to the road of an enclosure called Halsee Bagaun, which said Halsee Bagaun is included within the said town of Calcutta and from the said northern angle by a line drawn eastward along the southern side of the ditch or trench which encloses the said Halsee Bagaun to the Post or Mete marked No. 6, and from thence southward along the western side of the said ditch or trench to the Post or Mete also marked No. 6, and from the said last mentioned Post or Mete westward along the northern side of the said ditch or trench, until the said line reaches the mark No. 7, where there is a Tannah, and from the said last mentioned Post or Mete, by a line drawn southward and on the western side of the Mahratta entrenchment and the eastern side of the Bytaconnal Road, as far as the remains of the said Mahratta entrenchment are visible to the Post or Mete No. 8, at the corner of Rajah Ramlochan's Bazar, and of the road leading to Belliah Ghaut, immediately opposite to Narain Chatterjea's road, and from the said last mentioned Post or Mete No. 8, by a line continued in a southern direction passing through Mirzapore and

drawn along the eastern side of the Bytaconnah Road, and leaving the Portuguese Burying-ground to the east until it reaches the Bytaconnah tree, where the two Posts or Metes, marked respectively No. 9 and 10, are fixed on each side of the road opposite to the Bow Bazar Road, and the Bytaconnah Bazar, and from the last-mentioned Post or Mete, marked No. 10, by a line drawn along the eastern side of the said Bytaconnah Road to the Post or Mete No. 11, opposite to Gopee Baboo's Bazar, which Bazar is situated between the Jaun Bazar and Dhurruntollah Roads, and from thence in the same direction until the said line reaches the Post or Mete No. 12, at the point or turning of the said road towards the west, leaving Dhee Sreerampore on the east and south-east, and thereby including within the limits of Calcutta the Protestant Burying-ground, Chowringhy, and the lands thereunto belonging called Dhee Birjee.

The SOUTHERN BOUNDARY is declared to commence, and does accordingly commence, from the last mentioned Post or Mete No. 12, and is declared to continue, and does accordingly continue, by a line drawn from thence to the eastward with a little inclination to the southward, along the southern side of the Public Road, excluding Dhee Chuckerber, and including Bunneapokah otherwise called Arreapokah, in Dhee Birjee, until the said line reaches the beginning of the Russapuglah Road immediately opposite to the Chowringhy High Road, where the Post or Mete No. 13 is fixed, and from the said Post or Mete No. 13, by a line running to the westward along the southern side of the Public Road to the Post or Mete No. 14, fixed between the Tannah and the General Hospital, and passing on westerly to the Post or Mete No. 15, at the foot of the Allipore Bridge, and excluding the General Hospital aforesaid, the Hospital for Insanes, and the Hospital Burying-ground situated in Dhee Bhawanipore, and from thence and from the south side of the said Allipore Bridge, by a line drawn and continued along the south side of the Nullah commonly called Tolly's Nullah at high water-mark to the Post or Mete marked No. 16, and from thence passing the foot or south end of Surmon's Bridge, commonly called Kidderpore Bridge, and extending to the mouth of the said Nullah where it enters the river Hooghly, excluding Watson's Dock, and to the Post or Mete marked No. 17, and then proceeding from east to west across the said river Hooghly to the south-east point of

Major Kyd's garden, and excluding the said garden and the village of Sheebpore, at which point a Post or Mete marked No. 18 is directed to be fixed ; and,

"The WESTERN BOUNDARY is declared to commence, and does accordingly commence, at the said Point where the said Post or Mete marked No. 18 is fixed and is declared to continue, and does accordingly continue, from thence by a line drawn at low water-mark along the western side of the said river Hooghly, but excluding the ghauts of Ramkissenpore, Howrah and Sulkeah, where Posts or Metes are fixed marked respectively Nos. 19, 20, and 21, until the said line reaches the northern point of Colonel Robertson's garden, or Jackapore aforesaid, where a Post or Mete is fixed, marked No. 22, and immediately opposite to the Post or Mete No. 1, at Chitpore Bridge.

"Declared and proclaimed by order of the Governor-General in Council of Fort William in Bengal, this 10th day of September 1794".

(Signed) E. Hay.

Secretary to the Government.

(From Serton-Karr, *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes*  
Vol. II (1789-1797), Calcutta, 1865, pp. 129-132)

## APPENDIX N

### ZEMINDARS OR COLLECTORS OF CALCUTTA\* (1700-1990)

Sheldon, Ralph (1700)	Collett, Waterworth (Feb. 1719 to July 1920)
Bowcher, Benjamin (1704-1705)	Eyre, John (July 1720 to May 1721)
Winder, Jonathan (Sept. 24 to Oct. 7, 1705)	Stackhouse, John (May 1721)
Cole, John (Oct. 8, 1705 to Sept. 23, 1706)	Thomas, Braddyy (April 30, 1728)
King, Arthur (April 8 to Sept. 23 1706)	Jackson, John (1743)
Lloyd, William (Sept. 23 to Nov. 1706)	Eyles, Edward (1748)
Bugden, William (Nov. 1706 to Dec. 1709)	Samuel Rooper (March 2, 1749)
Lloyd, William (Dec. 1709)	Holwell, J.Z. (1752 to 1756)
Blunt, Samuel (Feb. 16, 1710)	Collet, Matthew (1758)
Spencer (Feb. 1710)	Frankland, William (Dec. 1759 to November 1760)
Calvert, John (July 1710 to July 13, 1711)	Sumner, William B. (1760)
Feake, Samuel (July 13, 1711)	Ellis, William (Dec. 1760 to Aug. 1761)
Lloyd, William (August 31, 1711)	Amyatt, Peter (Sept. 1761 to March 1763)
Williamson, James (October 1 1711 to July 28, 1712)	Marriott, Randolph (March to May, 1763)
Deane, John (July 28 to August 15, 1712)	Billers, William (May 1763 to March, 1764)
Page, Edward (August 15, 1712 to May 6, 1714)	Middleton, Samuel (March 1764 to Sept. 1764)
Browe, Samuel (May 6, 1714 to May 23, 1715)	Playdell, Charles Stafford (Oct. 1764 to July 1765)
Deane, John (May 23, 1715)	Gray, George (1765)
Frankland, Henry (April 1716 to 1781)	Sumner, William B. (August 1765 to May 1766)
Spencer, William (July 1718 to Jan. 1719)	Watts, Hugh (June 1766 to Feb. 1767)

- Russell, Claude (Feb. 1767 to August, 1767)
- Beecher, Richard (Sept. 1767 to May, 1768)
- Ffloyer, Charles (Officiating in 1767)
- Alexander, James (1768 to October, 1769)
- Russell, Claude (November 1769 to October 1770)
- Holme, John (1770 to August 1772)
- Lewis, Samuel (August to November, 1772)
- Lane, Thomas (November 1772 to February 1773)
- Dacres, Philip Milner (February 1773 to May 1773)
- Barwell, Richard (June to August, 1773)
- Graham, J. (August 1773)
- Dacres, Philip Milner (December 1773 to 1774)
- Cottrell, Henry (January 1775 to December 1775)
- Goring, Charles (January 1776 to December 1777)
- Anderson, D. (January 1778 to May 1780)
- Golding, E. (sometime in 1778)
- Evelyn, John (May 1780 to April 1782)
- More, J. (1782)
- Douglas, Thomas (May 1782 to August 1783)
- Scott, John (July 1784 to April 1785)
- Seton, Alexander (May 1785 to September 1786 & May 1788 to September, 1788)
- Lumsden J. (Acting Collector, 1786 to 1788)
- Harrington, J.H. (Acting Collector, Sept. to 31st October, 1788)
- Gladwin, Francis (November 1788 to May 1789)
- Graham, James (August 1799 to February 1801)
- Fitzroy, Frederick (March 1801 to March 1803)
- Thornhill, John (1803 to April 1804)
- Proby, J. J. B. (May 1804 to July 1805)
- D'Oyly, Sir John (1806 to September 1807)
- Treves, Pellegrine (October 1807 to 1811)
- Thackeray, Richmond (1812 to 1813)
- Hook, W. (1814 to 1815)
- Ogilvie, Adam (1815)
- Forsyth, John (Acting Collector in 1816)
- D'Oyly, Charles (Acting Collector 1816)
- Trower, Charles (1817 to 1819)
- Lind, Alexander Francis (January 1819)
- Chase, R. ; Phillips, C. ; Warde, G. ; Petre, W. ; Trotter, J. ; Wills, R. ; Hunter, R. ; Magniac, F. Lane ; Wyatt, T. ; Lind,

A.F.—Collectors from 1819 to 1823.	Rajnarain Banerjee, 1926
C. Trower, (1823 to 1835)	Suresh Ch. Sen, 1930
Henry Swann Oldfield, (1836)	Khan Bahadur
J. C., Erskine, 1837	Mahmood Ahmad, 1938
C. Francis, 29 August 1837	Rai Bahadur
(Uncovenanted Civil Servant)	Anil Ch. Lahiri, 1943
J. Martin, W. Byrne, M. Crow, M. Johnstone, D. W. Fraser, J. H. Young (upto 1853)	Charu Ch. Sen, 18 February 1946 to 1 March 1948
—not known	S. Dasgupta, January 1948
F. A. Lustington, December, 1855	R. Bose, March, 1948
E. T Trevor, 1856	K. N. Mitra, January, 1949
William Heyshan, 1856-60	S. N. Bose, July 1950 to July, 1952
Kailash Ch. Dutt, 1857	N. C. Ghosh, August, 1952
Sib Ch. Dutt, Sept. 1860 to Nov. 1861	31 Dec., 1957
Abhoy Ch. Mullick, Dec 1862	A. K. Bhattacharyya, January 1, 1958 to Aug. 1961
Hampton, 1862	M. K. Chakrabarti, Sept. 1961 to June 4, 1965
J. Mackenzie, 1872	Dr. A. R. Biswas, July, 1965 to June 13, 1969
G. M. Goodricke, 1882	T. P. Bhattacharyya, Sept. 1969 to July, 1991
R. Sterndale, May, 1884	P. L. Bhattacharyya, Feb., 1972 to July, 1975
Durgagati Banerjee, 1888	N. Ganguly, Aug. 6, 1973 to March 23, 1976
Chandra Narayan Singh, 1901	S. S. Mukherjee, March 24, 1976 to Jan. 31, 1979
Mahananda Gupta, 1903	S. R. Chakrabarti, February 1979 to Dec. 31, 1980
J. T. Babonean, 1906	B. Bhattacharyya, January 13, 1981—
Jamini Mohan Das, 1915	
Nityananda Bhar, 1917	
J. G. Dunlop I.C.S., 1919	
R. Birly I.C.S., 1920	
F. B. Bradley-Birt, I.C.S., 1921	

From Wilson's *Early Annals* (3 vol. mes), and Sterndale's *Historical Account of the Calcutta Collectorate* and Rainey's *Historical and Topographical sketch of Calcutta*.

## APPENDIX O

### POLICE DIVISIONS OF CALCUTTA IN 1785

*Calcutta Gazette*, June 9th, 1785

Notice is hereby given, that the Commissioners of Police having found it necessary to make sundry alterations in the mode of conducting the duties of Scavenger of the Town of Calcutta, which duties they have thought proper to place under the management of Joseph Sherburne, who holds his Office at Nos. 1 and 3 in his bazar, it is requested that all persons, inhabitants of Calcutta, will attend to the following regulations, which have been made with the approbation of the Hon'ble the Governor General and Council :—

I. The Town divided into 31 divisions, there being as many Thannahdars.

II. Seven Thannahs to the English Town, four Carts stationed at each, bearing the number of their respective Thannahs. Two Carts to each in the Black Town.

III. All applications to be made to the Superintendent's Officers in each Thannahs, and in cases of their inattention or neglect, to the Superintendent at his Office.

IV. The regulations now existing with respect to laying dirt and rubbish in the Streets, to be strictly enforced.

#### *Divisions and Thannahs of Calcutta*

No.	Where situated	Thannahdars	Superintendent Officers
1.	Armenian Church	Soobhanny	Emaum Bux
2.	Old Fort	Ram Sing	Shaik Deedar Mahomed
3.	Chandpaul Gaut	Sheryet Ullah	Mahmud Ameer
4.	South of the Great Tank	Alladey	Eyaz Ullah
5.	Durumtulla	Wadd Cawn	Mahmud Bacoer
6.	Old Court House	Mootey Ullah	Najeeb Ullah
7.	Dumtulla	Ramkissen	Shaik Jawn Mahomed
8.	Amragully & Punchanand Tulla	Ryam Uddeen	Golam Rohmut

No.	Where situated	Thannahdars	Superintendent Officers
9.	China Bazar	Sitteram	Mahmud Tuckay
10.	Chandnee Choke	Ramnauth	Ram Sing
11.	Trul Bazar	Anwar	Punnah Ullah
12.	Gouh Mah Poker	Beer Sing	Mahmud Cawn
13.	Chuook Danga	Bancha Ram	Beycant Cawn
14.	Simlah Bazar	Roshun	Hossain Cawn
15.	Lunluncah Bazar	Taze Udden	Jowan Cawn
16.	Molungah & Putool Dungan	Soonah Ullah	Pir Mahomed
17.	Cober Dingar	Attaram	Shack Sakeer
18.	Byta Khannah	Connoy	Bruary Cawn
19.	Sham Pucknuah	Totaram	Mahmud Cawn
20.	Soam Bazar	Sunker	Jar Ullah
21.	Pudda Puckreah	Sullage Ram	Panchoo Cawn
22.	Coomar Tulley	Hurrikisna	Bany Roy
23.	Joora Sanko	Gopee & Attaram	Soobunky Panah
24.	Mutchua Bazar	Soobhanny	Shaik Emaum Udded
25.	Jaun Bazar	Colly Churn	Mahmud Kamil
26.	Dinga Bangah	Fuckeer Chand	Shaik Emaum Cawn
27.	Sootanutty Haut Colla	Abdul Jubba	Bunjun Sing
28.	Duoy Huattah	Totaram	Chedeh Ram
29.	Hanse Pookriah	Issorey	Khosla Sing
30.	Colimbah	Mohun	Shaik Burkoot Ullah
31.	Jora Bagaun	Totaram	Beyjoo Roy

N.B. The regulations may be seen at large, or copies taken, on application at the Commission House.

By Order of the Commissioners,  
H. HONYCOMB, *Secretary*

Fort William,  
May 18th, 1785

(From Seton-Karr's *Selections from Calcutta* for the years 1784-1788, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1864, pp. 115-16).



## APPENDIX P

### [SCHEDULE I]

#### CALCUTTA

[See sections 2(9), 601 and 625]

#### BOUNDARIES

A line drawn along the outer edge of Pramanick Ghat Road, Kashinath Duta Road, Kali Charan Ghose Road and Ramkrishna Ghose Road, thence southward along the western edge of the Eastern Railways where the boundary line meets the New Canal, thence eastward along the southern bank of the New Canal and Kestopur Canal up to the point where it meets the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass; thence southward along the western edge of the Eastern Metropolitan Bypass to the point where it meets the New Canal; thence southward along the eastern bank of New Canal to the point where it meets the outlet for stormwater; thence southeast along the western edge of Dr. B. N. Dey Road to the end of Dhapa mauza (J.L. No. 2); thence southward along the eastern boundary of Dhapa mauza (J.L. No. 2); up to the point where it meets the southern boundary of Chowbhaga mauza (J.L. No. 3), thence further west along the southern boundary of Chowbhaga mauza (J.L. No. 3); thence southward along the eastern boundaries of Chowbhaga (J.L. No. 3), Nonadanga (J.L. No. 10), Madurdaha (J.L. No. 12), Kalikapur (J.L. No. 20), Barakhola (J.L. No. 21) mauzas to the point where it meets the northern boundary of Chak Ganiagachi mauza (J.L. No. 24); thence eastward along the northern boundary of Chak Ganiagachi mauza (J.L. No. 24) to the point where it meets the north-eastern boundary of Nayabad mauza (J.L. No. 25); thence

1. Schedule I was substituted for original schedule I by section 19 of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 1983 (West Bengal Act XXXII of 1983), vide Calcutta Gazette notification No. 2704L dated 1st November, 1983, w.e.f. 4/1/84 vide notification No. 959/C4/MIA—26/83 dated 21.12.83.

outh and westward along the eastern and southern boundaries of Nayabad mauza (J. L. No. 25) to the point where it meets the northern boundary of Chak Garia mauza (J. L. No. 26) ; hence south and westward along the eastern and southern boundaries of Chak Garia mauza (J. L. No. 26) and southern boundaries of Briji (J. L. No. 27) and Bainsabghata (J. L. No. 28) mauzas to the point where it meets the eastern boundary of Kamdahari mauza (J. L. No. 49) ; thence southward along the eastern boundary of Kamdahari mauza (J. L. No. 49) ; thence westward along the southern boundaries of Kamdahari (J. L. No. 49), Brahmapur (J. L. No. 48), Rainagar (J. L. No. 47), Bansdrani (J. L. No. 45), Chakdah (J. L. No. 44) and Purba Putiāri (J. L. No. 43) mauzas to the point where it meets the eastern bank of Kaorapukur Khal ; thence across the Kaorapukur Khal eastward to the point where it meets Dhalipara Road ; thence westward along Dhalipara Road and along Dag Nos. 80, 81, 82, 83, 87, 88, 91, 92, 93, 96, 354, 353, 100, 103, 102 of Chak Thakurani mauza (J. L. No. 24) ; thence southward along Dag Nos. 3563, 3564, 3813, 3565, 3566, 3585, 3584 up to Dag No. 3586 of Purba Barisha mauza (J. L. No. 23) ; thence westward up to Dag No. 3612 of Purba Barisha mauza (J. L. No. 23) ; thence again southward along Dag Nos. 3809, 3613, 3795, 3796, 3797, 3799, 3800, 3801 and 3802 of Purba Barisha mauza (J. L. No. 23) ; thence westward along Mahatma Gandhi Road to the point where it meets Diamond Harbour Road ; thence across Diamond Harbour Road and westward along the southern boundary of mauza Paschim Barisha (J. L. No. 19) up to Dag No. 2161 of Paschim Barisha mauza (J. L. No. 19) ; thence northward along Dag Nos. 2160, 2159, 2158, 2157, 2154, 2652, 2651, 2280, 2650, 2153, 2139, 2642, 2638, 2587, 2354 and 2353 of mauza Paschim Barisha (J. L. No. 19) ; thence further north along Dag Nos. 2335, 2324, 2396, 2234, 2208 and 2215 of mauza Sarsuna (J. L. No. 17) ; thence westward along Dag Nos. 2309, 2275, 2199, 2201, 2130, 2127, 2124, 2123, 2122, 2120, 2119, 2118, 2116, 2348, 2374, 745, 744, 742, 741, 739 and 738 of mauza Sarsuna (J. L. No. 17) ; thence northward along Dag Nos. 737, 736, 735, 734 and 973 of mauza Sarsuna (J. L. No. 17) and along Dag Nos. 177, 176, 175, 174, 173, 172 and 171 of mauza Sonamukhi (J. L. No. 34) ; thence west and northward along Dag Nos. 726, 725, 722, 718, 717, 716,

699, 1648, 696, 682, 681, 680, 679, 678, 672, 671, 1652, 590, 591, 593, 594, 537, 533, 532, 531, 530, 529, 527, 526, 525, 524, 470, 473, 472, and 113 of Sarsuna mauza (J. L. No. 17) ; thence westward along Dag Nos. 780, 779, 841, 812, 719 and 452 of mauza Shibrampur (J. L. No. 18) ; thence northward and westward along the western boundary of Shibrampur mauza and southern edge of Shibrampur Road to the point where it meets Ho Chi Minh Sarani ; thence eastward along southern edge of the Ho Chi Minh Sarani to the point where it meets Kastodanga Road ; thence further east along the northern edge of Ho Chi Minh Sarani to Dag No. 2588 of mauza Sarsuna (J. L. No. 17) ; thence northward along the western edge of Beledanga Road up to Dag No. 2933 of mauza Parui (J. L. No. 3) ; thence further north along Dag Nos. 2933, 2932, 2931, 2930, 2929, 2874, 2873, 2872, 2871, 2868, 2870, 2869, 2855, 2854, 2853, 2852 and 2849 of mauza Parui (J. L. No. 3) ; then eastward along Dag Nos. 2848, 2847, 2843, 2840, 2838, 3501 and 2836 of Parui mauza (J. L. No. 3) ; thence northward along Dag Nos. 2835, 2834, 2833, 2832, 2831, 2824, 2823, 2813, 2809, 2808, 2807, 2806, 2802 and 2801 of Parui mauza (J. L. No. 3) ; thence further north along Dag Nos. 768, 767, 765, 764, 763, 762, 761, 758, 757, 719, 1231, 714, 716, 715, 1189, 713, 1190, 703, 313, 330 and 329 of Behala mauza (J. L. No. 2) ; thence westward along Dag Nos. 328, 327, 325, 320 and 317 of Behala mauza (J. L. No. 2) ; thence northward along Dag Nos. 257, 256, 253, 251, 250, 127, 126, 120, 121, 66 and 65 of mauza Behala (J. L. No. 2) to the point where it meets Budge Budge Road, and thence westward along Budge Budge Road up to Hatchala Hindu Burial Ground ; thence northward along the western boundary of the Port Commissioner's land upto the point where it meets Trenching Ground Road near its junction with Dinu Mistry Lane ; thence westward along the northern boundaries of Ram Das Hati, Makhalthati and Panchur mauzas to the point where it meets Kankhuli Road ; thence southward along the eastern edge of Kankhuli Road to the point where it meets the western boundary of Panchur mauza ; thence west and northward and again westward along the eastern and northern boundaries of Panchur mauza to the point where it meets Akra Road ; thence across Akra Road and northward, eastward, again northward, westward, southward and again westward along

eastern, northern and western boundaries of Akra mauza to the point where it meets the river Hooghly ; thence northward along the eastern bank of the river Hooghly and eastward along the southern bank of the river Hooghly up to the point where it meets eastern side road in continuation of Clyde Row ; thence eastward along the southern edge of Clyde Row to the point where it meets St. George's Gate Road (Munsi Premchand Sarani) ; thence southward along the eastern edge of St. George's Gate Road (Munsi Premchand Sarani) to the point where it meets Kidderpur Road ; thence northward along the western edge of Kidderpur Road and Red Road to the point where it meets Lawrence Road ; thence westward along the southern edge of Lawrence Road and Eden Garden Road and a line drawn in continuation of Eden Garden Road to the river Hooghly ; thence northward along the eastern bank of the river Hooghly to the western terminus of Pramanick Ghat Road.



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